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RUSSIA'S DECLINE AND FALL

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The Secret History of a Great Debacle

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PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL
(CATHERINE KOLB-DANVIN)

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PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD

In undertaking this book the author makes no pretension to write a history of the war. She has sought, rather, to place before the reader a record of the feelings and impressions which agitated Russian Society during the first year of the war—for Russia the most anxious period of the whole campaign. Into this recital the Princess has focused sufficient of political events and of the actual situation at the Front to supply a clearly defined view of the period from July, 1914, to the last days of 1915.

In a communication to the publishers, the author expressed the hope that the book may "prove interesting from the psychological point of view, especially if taken in connection with the development of Russia after peace has been concluded, and the new orientation that its politics are bound to take in the immediate as well as in the distant future. It is with this intention," she added, "that I am writing, and also because I feel that it may help to explain some other momentous events which I foresee, and of which it seems to me that the dawn is at hand."

Foreword

When it is stated that the MS. for this book was delivered to the publishers at intervals extending from July, 1915, to January, 1916, the prescience displayed in the concluding sentence of the preceding paragraph will be appreciated. This insight is strikingly manifested throughout the book, particularly in the social and political references.

The inner workings against which Russia had to fight at the very time that she was waging material war against the German, the elements which culminated later in revolution, the struggle of aspiration with atrophy are given in their true proportion, and the inexplicable peace into which Russia was beguiled after setting her house in order is made more intelligible.

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RUSSIA'S DECLINE AND FALL

CHAPTER I.

The Pivot of Circumstance

The 28th of June, 1914, was a Sunday, a day when newspapers in Russia are usually scarce of news, and weary members of the staff are able to seek a few hours' repose from their duties, which in summer are most tedious. I was hoping to enjoy a quiet evening at home, when I was startled by the telephone bell. My editor rung me up to tell of the tragedy which had taken place that same afternoon at Sarajevo, news of which had just reached him.

To say that I was stunned is saying little. I had known intimately Count and Countess Chotek, the parents of the unfortunate Duchess of Hohenberg. Fortune had transformed Sophy Chotek from a lady-in-waiting on the haughty Archduchess Isabella of Austria into the consort of the heir-presumptive to the Habsburg monarchy. I had seen her as a small child, and later on as a girl just out of her 'teens, in her mother's house in Brussels, where her father was Austrian Minister. I had entirely lost sight of her in after years; yet at that moment the image of the bright and happy child, with laughing blue eyes and golden hair, rose up before me, whence my thoughts flew to her orphaned children—to the brutally tragic ending of her many ambitions on their behalf. No one could have foreseen the strange

freak of destiny which was to associate her name with one of the greatest dramas history will ever have to record, to which her assassination was to make a fitting prologue. In Petersburg, where they looked upon Sophy Chotek's husband as the head of the war party in Austria, the news of his murder was received with horror. At the same time there was a certain relief, inasmuch as everybody thought it was going to put an end to a systematically aggressive policy which had caused much apprehension in Russia during the last Balkan crisis. In the month of June, 1914, Russian society dreaded war above everything else; and was more intent upon avoiding a conflict than upon any prospect of winning laurels. Strange as it may seem now, it is an undoubted fact that at the time the Emperor William was not half so much dreaded as the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was supposed to be a rabid Russophobe, whilst the Head of the Hohenzollern dynasty was credited with much wisdom, as well as with a sincere desire to uphold the peace he had succeeded in preserving during the twenty-five years of his reign.

A year before the Sarajevo tragedy, the Tsar had visited Berlin on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Victoria Louise of Prussia, the only daughter of the German Emperor and Empress, with the only son and heir of the Duke of Cumberland, and of the pretty Princess Thyra of Denmark. King George of England and Queen Mary also attended these nuptials, and this meeting of the three most powerful sovereigns in Europe had been marked by great cordiality. On his return to his own capital the Tsar appeared to be quite delighted with the very warm welcome he had received in Berlin, and more inclined than ever before toward the establishment of more intimate relations than those already existing between Russia and Germany. William II. had shown himself very wise during the world-crisis at the period of the two Balkan wars. He had given what appeared to be sincere proofs of his desire to

use his authority to remove the difficult situation which circumstances, even more than the ill-will of men, had created. His conduct in that respect won him the esteem of Europe for the spirit of restraint which had characterised his whole conduct.

Archduke Francis Ferdinand, on the contrary, was credited with strongly warlike leanings, and was supposed to be eager for military laurels.

For some considerable time his position had not been very secure among the upper classes in Austria. Society could not forgive his marriage ; furthermore, it was dreaded that, once he became master, he would raise his morganatic wife to the throne as, at least, a Queen of Hungary—even, perhaps, put on her head the Imperial crown of the Austrian Empire, to which he stood the undoubted heir. A military success, Francis Ferdinand firmly believed, would wipe away all this feeling and make his social stability unassailable. He had never made a secret of his antipathy to Russia, where the aggressive tone of Austrian policy on the Balkan question was ascribed to the Archduke as well as the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was supposed in Petersburg that the accession to the throne of Archduke Francis Ferdinand would mean a renewal of anti-Russian activity on the part of those who controlled foreign affairs at the Ball Platz : it was not remarkable, therefore, that when the news of the abominable crime that took his life and that of his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, reached Russia, a certain feeling of relief was mixed with detestation for the foul deed. Official Russia began to breathe more freely than for some time at the thought of the removal from the political scene of Europe of such a dangerous element as the personal feelings of the Archduke towards the Tsar's dominions.

The day following Francis Ferdinand's assassination, one of the principal organs of the Russian press, commenting upon the event, expressed itself in the following

terms, which will convey better than words of mine the general impression this stupendous event produced in Russia: "In the presence of the catastrophes which have accumulated upon the head of the unfortunate Emperor Francis Joseph," it wrote, "Russia can only feel the deepest, the most sincere regret and commiseration. But at the same time it is impossible to allow our thoughts to rest exclusively on the tragic position of the old monarch; we must also acknowledge that we find ourselves in the presence of an event of the greatest political importance. The heir of the Emperor Francis Joseph, who was considered to be such an enemy of peace, and whose possible advent to the throne was viewed with such apprehension by all the partisans of civilisation and progress, and with such joy by the upholders of militarism, has been killed. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Esta, whose future accession to the monarchy of the Habsburgs was generally supposed to open for it a new era of war—war with Russia, war with the rest of Europe—is dead. In his person has fallen—unfortunately for us under a blow dealt by the hand of a Slav—a prince who was suspected to carry in his breast the spark that was to set fire to a general conflagration of the whole world; by his death has been removed from this scene the only active personality, the only real strong character that the Austrian Empire possessed. Whilst we are full of sympathy for the sorrow of the old man who thus, for the second time, tragically loses the heir to his Empire, we cannot close our eyes to the significance of the event that has just taken place. Austria, at this moment, when she is standing before the open graves of the two victims of this dastardly crime, is also undergoing a trial such as rarely occurs to a nation. The most elementary feelings of international courtesy forbid us to enlarge to-day on this point. But what we can, and what we must say, is that fate is putting at last before Austria the opportunity to redeem many of her past sins—sins of the last ten

years. The misfortune that has befallen her yesterday brings to her the psychological moment to change the course of her hitherto aggressive policy, and to soften the spirit of militarism which has lately distinguished her whole conduct.

"For the sake of the peace and of the prosperity of Europe we allow ourselves to express the wish that this fearful drama, which has added another bloody page to the history of the Habsburg dynasty, will mark the opening of a new period in the existence of Austria, and that both she and the rest of Europe will enter an era of peace and security such as has not been enjoyed lately."

These words truly express the feelings of Russian society after the murder of the Archduke. Everybody deplored it, but everybody believed that his death had removed the greatest danger to the peace of Europe. No one gave a single thought to the possibility that it might bring about the dreaded storm. At the Russian Court the assassination of Francis Ferdinand produced an impression of sincere horror. The Tsar conveyed at once his condolences to Francis Joseph, expressed his deepest sympathy with the bereaved monarch, as well as his consternation and indignation at the crime. At the funeral service which was celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church of St. Catherine, in Petersburg, for the repose of the souls of the murdered Archduke and of his unfortunate consort, the Emperor Nicholas was represented by one of his uncles, who, with other members of the Imperial family, all donned Austrian uniform. Indeed, it seemed at first as if this unexpected catastrophe would draw the Romanoff and the Habsburg dynasties into a closer union. It is quite certain that, at the particular moment I am referring to, no one either at the Russian Foreign Office or at the War Office, nor in the select circles of Petersburg society, suspected that it would prove just the one spark which was going to set ablaze a general conflagration.

Almost immediately after the Sarajevo tragedy, strikes of unusual magnitude broke out in Petersburg, and completely absorbed the attention of the public. About 300,000 workmen left their employers in the march and stopped working. They openly declared that by doing so they wanted to protest against the aggressive policy which the government had lately inaugurated in regard to Germany. This point deserves to be particularly noticed if one wants to form an exact and true opinion as to the political situation in Russia at the beginning of this eventful month of July, 1914. Russia then did not desire war, and far from wishing to assume a hostile attitude in regard to any of her neighbours, and especially in regard to Germany, she was sincerely desirous of getting into closer business and industrial relations with the latter country. She was, indeed, looking very much askance at every manifestation of French Chauvinism, as well as at the visit of M. Poincaré to Tsarskoye Selo. She feared the activity of the Southern Ally might bring international complications. When an English squadron, commanded by Rear-Admiral Beatty, had visited Russian shores only a month before, it had an enthusiastic reception, and an extraordinary enthusiasm had greeted its appearance in Baltic waters. But when the French President arrived a considerable coolness had been exhibited on the part of the population of the capital; and the man in the street, who had been very much to the front during the visit of the British Fleet, took absolutely no part in the welcome extended to M. Poincaré by official circles. I go even further and say that the articles which the French press published on that momentous occasion were viewed with distinct disfavour. Whilst society, or at least that part of it not linked with Court circles, or in governmental spheres, abstained carefully from any manifestations that might have been construed as an acquiescence in a policy that it condemned *in petto*, the workmen in the factories declared loudly that the arrival of the French President

constituted a menace to a peace which was essential to the country ; they at least meant to show the distrust it inspired in them. They did so by going on strike, and inducing other industrial centres in Russia to follow their example. For three successive days processions of workmen paraded the streets ; the newspapers had to cease publication owing to the absence of compositors and printers ; the tramcars stopped running, or were stormed by the crowds, who smashed the windows, and general disorders took place everywhere in the capital. But as soon as the President had sailed away things returned to the normal, and order was immediately restored without the intervention of the police, who—having been prevented by "superior orders" to resort to extreme measures during the visit of M. Poincaré—were preparing to interfere with energy against strikers so soon as he had taken his leave. The police, however, were spared that trouble, because the workmen returned to their various factories a few hours later.

The strike gave rise to much comment, and many who had not shared the enthusiasm which at one time had really existed in Russia with regard to the French alliance, found in the industrial upheaval a support for their oft-expressed opinion that France, in order to satisfy her desire for revenge against Prussia, was doing her best to draw Russia into a war with Germany. Moreover, said these strikers, France wanted formidable increases to the forces of the Russian Army and Navy, and consequently was trying to lay upon Russian shoulders burdens which would ultimately encumber very heavily her economic existence. These people made too much, perhaps, of the protestation of the Russian workmen ; certainly they talked about it far too openly.

The German Ambassador, Count von Pourtalès, an amiable though not at all a far-seeing man, honestly believed that all these protestations tended to prove that Russia was rising up in arms against its government, and that we

were on the eve of a new revolution, certain to break out should any international complications arise. If what I have been told from reliable sources is true, it seems that he wrote in that same sense to his government, thereby encouraging it in an aggressive policy, directed not only against France, but also against Russia.

When M. Poincaré had started on his return journey to France, no one in Petersburg yet suspected that we were standing on the threshold of serious political developments, and all who, for some reason or other, had delayed departure from the capital, prepared to leave it for a short or a long holiday, according to circumstances. Journalists, whom the visit of the President had kept busy, were beginning to breathe again, and to dream of green fields and pastures, and had almost forgotten the tragedy of Sarajevo. The Austrian Government had not allowed the matter to rest, but had been pursuing their own advantage with unflagging energy, till, suddenly, in the midst of the general quietude, there burst upon the world, like a thunderbolt, the news that the Vienna cabinet had sent an ultimatum to Serbia, to which she requested a reply within forty-eight hours.

At first no one would believe the news; then, when it was established, no one would admit that it could possibly be construed as a first step towards a general war of all the great powers of the Continent. It seemed so utterly impossible to think that Germany, and especially the Emperor William, could encourage the ministers of old, weak, tottering Francis Joseph in such a mad course of action. When it became known that the Serbian Government, in its desire to preserve the peace of the world, had decided to satisfy nearly all the demands which Austria had addressed to her, no one doubted but that a conflict was safely evaded, and the demands about to be settled in some way or other, either directly between Vienna and Belgrade, or else through the mediation of Europe, and especially of the

Emperor William of Germany, about whose pacific disposition no one at that time entertained the slightest fear, would restore the equilibrium.

All these hopes were about to be dashed to the ground. It soon became evident, even to the most optimistic, that the whole incident of the Austrian ultimatum had been carried through in order to find a pretext to enable Germany to declare war upon both Russia and France. The Emperor William suddenly appeared before the eyes of the startled world in quite a new and different light; and even those who had steadily refused to believe in the danger that others, more shrewd, had seen looming on the horizon, were obliged to admit that it was imminent. People had hardly realised that the only thing to do was to get ready to face events unflinchingly, when the fury of Armageddon burst forth.

CHAPTER II.

How Russia Mobilised.

When all the signs that heralded the storm are remembered, one can but wonder at the blindness of the Russian public. Whether it was due to the conviction, which prevailed everywhere, that Germany would succeed in putting an end to the vagaries of Austria, it is difficult to judge; but even when the famous ultimatum was sent to Belgrade, people smilingly declared that it was very ridiculous of the cabinet at Vienna to venture on such a step. It was known by Austrian diplomatists, said even well-informed Russians, that the ultimatum could not lead to anything, because Russia would put her foot down on any attempt to crush Serbia, and would be backed by Germany. On every side regrets were heard that the Emperor William happened to be away on Norwegian seas, far from the centre of events, but no serious person believed that war was at hand; and few at the Foreign Office thought a crisis, to say nothing of war, was imminent. The general optimism was so great that it was only on the 24th of July (July 11th Russian calendar) that the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, M. Schébéko, received orders to return to his post—he had been absent on a holiday,—and that M. Sverbéew, his Berlin colleague, was told to hurry back to the German capital, and see what could be done there to bring Ball Platz to its senses.

On the other hand, the spirit of confidence which seemed prevalent in the soul of M. Sazonov was not shared in military circles, especially among the immediate surround-

ings of the Grand Duke Nicholas. The latter had long been the leader of the extreme Chauvinist party that clamoured for war with Germany, the successes of which would do away, in its opinion, with certain unpleasant remembrances that still existed concerning the Japanese campaign. Not one of the Chauvinists considered whether Russia had got over the reverses in the Far East in 1904, or could face another war, with the slightest chance of success, with a much more dangerous foe. The War Party had tried with all its might to cause the Russian Government, during the two Balkan wars, to support by its influence and its arms the Bulgarians and Serbs against Turkey. They were at the bottom of the strong manifestations which took place in 1912 and 1913 in Petersburg against Austria, the hereditary enemy of the Slavs in Turkey, and, indeed, throughout the Balkan Peninsula. At the time, however, the head of the Russian Cabinet was still M. Kokovtsov. With all his faults and inexperience of diplomacy, M. Kokovtsov possessed sufficient common sense, and knowledge of the resources of his country, to apply all his energy to warding off such a calamity as war. The consequences *he* realised, if others did not, would be far more stupendous than could be foreseen or expected. He was seconded by M. Sazonov, who shared his opinion on that point. To these two is owed the signing of the Bucharest treaty, after which the world thought it could breathe freely again.

In 1914 things were different. The President of the Council, M. Kokovtsov, had been replaced by M. Gorémykin, full of the best intentions, but an old man of 76 was not strong enough to show independence of character in presence of people like the Grand Duke. He was overawed by the explosions of frantic and entirely artificial enthusiasm, which roused unruly elements in the capital into manifestations which were both unreasonable and unhealthy, and which were then certainly not in accord with the intentions of the government.

The War Party failed totally to appreciate the magnitude of the danger. It did not know, what all those behind the scenes in Berlin were aware of, that the text of the Austrian ultimatum was very well known at Wilhelmstrasse; that it had partly been written there, and that it was only through the pressure exercised upon him by von Tschirsky, the German Ambassador at the Vienna Court, that Count Berchtold presented the ultimatum without softening its tone, as he had first intended to do. When the Russian Government became acquainted with its exact terms it did nothing better than ask the Austrian Cabinet to grant Serbia some extension of time for her reply, and at the same time to suggest a conference on the whole matter. This alone was an undignified act on the part of a strong country. It ought to have known that a conference would be refused; both in Vienna and in Berlin they were determined to make the ultimatum a pretext for drawing the sword, *coûte que coûte*. In that sense, the pistol shot which destroyed two lives at Sarajevo proved the best friend the ambitious and aggressive designs of the Emperor William could have found. It furnished him with the pretext he required to throw off his cloak of peacemaker, a garment which he had worn from the day he succeeded to the throne of his grandfather.

Had Russia possessed diplomats equal in wiliness to the Teuton, they would have been able at once to grasp what the ultimatum launched by Count Berchtold really meant. But Russian diplomacy shared the feelings of the Russian nation. It believed in the straightforwardness and the honesty of the people with whom it had to deal. The Emperor Nicholas, though worried by the ever-increasing insolence of Austria, really believed in the sincerity of the friendship of his German cousin; the telegrams which had been officially published leave us no doubt upon the point. When he telegraphed to William II., telling him that he relied on his co-operation to bring the crisis to a

peaceful solution, he was acting in perfect good faith, and he felt convinced that his appeal would meet with sympathy. Still fresh in his memory was the warm welcome which he had received in Berlin on the occasion of the marriage of the Duchess of Brunswick; and no one had ever told him, as it would have been the duty of certain people to do, that all protestations which were then made to him were but empty phrases, only destined to lull any suspicions entertained in Russian official circles as to the sincerity of German friendship. Perhaps, also, they had been evoked out of a feeling of momentary gratitude for the truly Imperial presents which the Tsar had brought with him for the youthful bride, the magnificence of which caused surprise in Berlin court circles, where one was not used to such splendour.

Instead, then, of taking the ultimatum as a direct challenge addressed to Russia, as it was meant to be, Russian diplomacy believed there was some sincerity in the desire of Germany to do away, once and for all, with that great bugbear the Russo-French Alliance. Russia therefore began to negotiate, and found herself so totally taken *au dépourvu* in the unexpected manner in which things were rushed upon her, that she could not even operate through the medium of responsible agents. By a stroke of ill-luck all her ambassadors, with the exception of Count Benckendorff—whom the season, then at its height, had kept in London—were away on leave. And, moreover, M. Hartwig, the Russian Minister at the Court of Belgrade, had died a few days before, his difficult post devolving upon a chargé-d'affaires, whose ability could not compensate for the increasing complications under which he had to labour, and the rather false position in which he found himself, owing to the fact that M. Hartwig had not seen fit to make him aware of the things which he saw or suspected, or what was his view of these premonitory signs of serious dangers in the future. That these dangers were not sufficiently

appreciated by some people is proved by a telegram published in the Russian Orange Book, dated July 13/26th, 1914, and sent to the Foreign Office in Petersburg by the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in Paris. M. Sevastopoulo, the sender, declared that the Director of the Political Department in the French Foreign Office had told him that, in his opinion, the German effort to induce the French Government to act together with the Berlin Cabinet, for the purpose of persuading Russia to come to an agreement with Austria, was nothing but a diplomatic manœuvre to influence public opinion in France, and to frighten the French into persuading Petersburg to give in to Ball Platz. The cruel irony of the situation lies in the fact that at that date the Austrian Army was already officially, and the German Army unofficially, mobilised; and that no one at Wilhelmstrasse gave a thought to the possibility of a peaceful solution of a crisis artificially provoked.

On the 11/24th of July a private meeting of the Council of Ministers took place under the presidency of the Tsar at Krasnoye Selo, when orders were sent to M. Schébéko to return immediately to Vienna. He was given special instructions, couched in a very firm tone, by which it was hoped the Austrian Government would become more reasonable in its demands. The Grand Duke Nicholas at this meeting expressed himself as being quite ready to fight the united forces of Austria and Germany. A general who was present, but whose name I prefer not to mention, exclaimed: "Why say Austrian and German forces? Surely we have no quarrel with Germany, and there is no likelihood of our going to war with her!" I heard this same remark more than once during those eventful days.

On that same day the Grand Duke Nicholas was appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the whole army; and the Emperor—at the instance of Grand Duke Nicholas—ordered the mobilisation of the 8th and the 11th Army Corps. The news, however, was not published, as

no one believed in the imminence of a serious danger. Late on that same July evening journalists who visited the Foreign Office in quest of news were told that the situation, though serious, was not at all hopeless; and that there were good grounds for believing that, even yet, matters might be arranged. The mobilisation was proceeded with in a leisurely manner, and it was certainly far from people's minds that Germany would imagine it was directed against her, rather than for the sole purpose of protecting the threatened existence of Serbia.

The duplicity which all along characterised the conduct of the Berlin Cabinet is illustrated by the following incident:

Some men belonging to the 11th Army Corps were on leave at Riga. When they were called to rejoin the colours, a German, who happened to see them start, asked where they were going. One of the soldiers replied: "To my battalion, on the German frontier." The battalion in question was then stationed at Kamieniec Podolsk, a small town on the borders of Galicia. In the eyes of the Russian peasant, both Prussia and Austria are Germany, and the soldier in question expressed himself quite innocently. Instantly a cry was raised in the German newspapers, to which this reply was immediately communicated; and the incident was given to the public as a proof that soldiers, at a time when no apparent conflict existed between Berlin and Petersburg, were being sent in large numbers to the German frontier, so as to be ready for invasion. In reality nothing of the kind had ever taken place, and the whole army was not even mobilised. Anyone acquainted with military matters ought to have known that, if there had ever existed any intention to attack Prussia, the authorities would never have mobilised the 8th and 11th Corps, which were stationed in the Southern provinces close to Galicia and the Bukovina. The troops in Poland and in the vicinity of East Prussia most certainly would have been called.

Meanwhile Austria had not been idle. On the 25th of July Francis Joseph had issued orders for a general mobilisation of his army and navy. News of this was received by the Russian Foreign Office during the night from the Russian General Consul in Prague, M. Kazanski, who got to hear of it some considerable time before it became known at the Russian Embassy in Vienna. Almost simultaneously with the publication of the mobilisation order in Austria, street demonstrations of a distinctly hostile character against Russia took place in Berlin, and an angry crowd collected in front of the Russian Embassy, whistling and throwing stones at the windows, the 'police' making no attempt to restrain the mob.

All this opened the eyes of the Russian Government, but the desire of the Emperor to preserve peace was so strong that he insisted on carrying patience to its utmost limits. Meanwhile Austria had categorically refused to show herself more lenient toward Serbia. Notwithstanding the fact that the reply of the Belgrade Cabinet had been couched in most moderate terms, and almost every point granted, the Austrian Minister and his staff, acting on the orders received from Vienna, left Belgrade.

It was only then that any step which might possibly have been construed as an indication that Russia had made up her mind to go to war took place in Petersburg. The cadets of the military schools were promoted officers one month earlier than would have been the case in the ordinary way; and the Guards, who, as usual, had been in camp at Krasnoye Selo, where the summer manœuvres generally take place, were ordered to return to town. A friend of mine, the correspondent of a French newspaper, who had occasion on that same day to talk with M. Gorémykin, the President of the Council of Ministers, related to me how the latter had told him that, during a cabinet consultation that morning, the Emperor, who was present, had told them that "for seven years he had endured the arrogance of

Austria, but his patience was now exhausted." It seems that it was also on this occasion that the Tsar asked the War Minister, General Soukhomlinov, to tell him frankly whether Russia was ready for war, to which the General replied that, though he could not have answered in the affirmative a year earlier, now he had no fear; a struggle was bound to end to the advantage of Russia. "A few, very few, privileged people learned that the mobilisation order had been extended to eight Army Corps; but by anyone looking at things impartially it could hardly be construed as a manifestation of spontaneous hostility against either Germany or Austria, if one takes into consideration that the incidents I have just related occurred on the 27th of July, whereas the Austrian general mobilisation order had been promulgated on the 25th, two days earlier."

The 27th of July, nevertheless, passed more hopefully than could have been expected. The Emperor William interrupted his holiday in Norway, and returned to Berlin to offer his mediation toward a peaceful solution of the crisis. Wise folk declared that this step had been taken too late. Still, everybody felt any humiliation would be better than war. It was also at this date that people connected with the Russian Foreign Office began to shake their heads and to admit the situation was grave. Suddenly the mob, which had been anything but warlike, owing to the essentially cosmopolitan character of Petersburg, became eager for a fray the importance of which it did not in the least grasp. The intellectual classes, on the contrary, grew daily more anxious, and the Liberal parties especially did not hide their alarm. Apprehension increased considerably when the news became official, late on the 28th of July, that Austria had declared war on Serbia, in spite of all the efforts of Russia to induce her to reconsider her decision. The next day the shelling of Belgrade began. The Serbian Government and the Crown Prince, who was fulfilling the duties of Regent at the time, owing to the

illness of his father, had moved the centre of government to Nish on the 26th. The situation, indeed, even then seemed absolutely dangerous; nevertheless, the order for a general Russian mobilisation was not yet signed by the Emperor Nicholas, though certainly precautionary measures had been taken, such as the order to put out the lights along the Baltic coast at night, and the restriction of railway traffic. Amid these anxieties came the thunderbolt of Germany's refusal of Sir Edward Grey's offer to confer, upon which such hopes had been based by the partisans of peace.

Germany definitely threw off the mask on the 28th. Up to this moment her conduct had been most mysterious. Indeed, now the reasons which actuated her have been disclosed, it is not easy to understand why she thought it worth while to play such a game. Perhaps she wanted to persuade her own people that their government had done all in their power to avert the catastrophe. If that were the object, the plan succeeded; the whole of the German nation became hypnotised by the enormous lie; it lost every sense of right and wrong, so artificially had its indignation been roused. Berlin was enthusiastic for the war; but, in spite of street manifestations, Russia was not. The Russians accepted it as a necessary evil, and with courage and resignation. It was only among the working class that loud murmurings were noticed. Indeed, some workmen in the composing-room where the daily paper on the staff of which I was working, the *Petersburg Courier*, was printed, declared to me that if they were asked to join their regiments they would never consent to shoot at the enemy, but would discharge their rifles in the air. I must hasten to add that this feeling existed only among a small minority; but still it was there, and if we compare it with the exultation shown by German workers in responding to the order of mobilisation, it is a symptom which deserves to be noticed.

On the 29th of July the Tsar signed the order for a general mobilisation; the Emperor William did likewise in Berlin, which made the situation almost hopeless. Nevertheless, the three days which followed upon these decisive measures were employed by the diplomacy of the Powers, except Germany and Austria, in efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. Sir Edward Grey in London, the French Government in Paris, and in Russia, M. Sazonov—who all through that trying time gave proofs of great tact and a most conciliatory disposition—attempted to persuade Berlin and Vienna that no one desired to provoke aggression, and that if only the conflict which had been menaced by Count Berchtold's ultimatum to Serbia were submitted to an International Conference, some way out would be found. The Russian Government, far from exciting the crowds, as was afterwards maintained in Berlin, begged the Press to preserve its calmness and not to rouse the feelings of the mob. The Emperor, though determined to do nothing which might compromise the dignity of Russia, yet made every possible personal effort to persuade William II. to listen to reason, and was heard more than once to say that he could not conceive how the German Emperor could believe that Russia really nursed aggressive designs against her German neighbour. The whole controversy only concerned Austro-Russian relations, having absolutely nothing to do with Prussia—so argued everyone in Russia, where the prevailing thought was that Germany had allowed herself unexpectedly and foolishly to be drawn into the vortex.

We can now judge objectively of these events, and realise that, though the incidents which brought about the war had been raised by Austria, they were in reality brought about by Germany. She believed herself ready to embark without risk upon the rash adventure which she considered indispensable for her future greatness, and simply ordered her ally to set a match to the vast conflagration. For

years Prussia had been preparing herself in secret for the struggle; had accumulated munitions to an extent which was not suspected even by informed German civilians; had built railways, roads, canals; had organised her commissariat and sanitary departments to perfection; and, unknown to everybody, had massed an enormous total of troops on her two frontiers. She felt thoroughly ready to attack her neighbours, and did not want to lose the advantage of this readiness. It was just her fateful moment, and she feared that she might not be able to hold the advantage for long.

The German Cabinet did its best to persuade the public that both France and Russia were planning to attack Germany in about two or three years' time, and that therefore it behoved them to prevent their neighbours doing so by striking a decisive blow first. Unfortunately the lie was believed, and even amongst those who had been the enemies of war it obtained general credence.

On the 31st of July the German Ambassador in Petersburg, Count von Pourtalès, presented an ultimatum to Russia, requesting her to demobilise within twenty-four hours. M. Sazonov told him with quiet nobility that it was beneath the dignity of a great country like Russia to give an answer to any request couched in such arrogant language. On that same evening both the city and Government of Petersburg were put under martial law.

The man in the street also began to make himself heard. The demonstrations which till then had taken place several times a day on the Nevski Prospekt assumed a serious character, in that men and women of mature age participated in them; no longer were they confined to young students or socialist workmen. The Slav committees, too, feeling the gravity of the situation, and not wishing to add to its complications, kept far more quiet than could have been expected.

The text of the German ultimatum only became known to the general public in the course of the 1st of August, the government having purposely refrained from communicating it to the Press until just before the declaration of war. But those who were in touch with the Foreign Office became aware of it at midnight of the 31st, and most of the great daily papers began to write leaders to appear after the catastrophe had occurred. Everyone knew now that war could no longer be avoided.

At seven o'clock in the evening of August 1st, 1914, Count Pourtalès called on M. Sazonov and was immediately received. Both men were profoundly moved, the Russian Minister being certainly the more impassive. The German Ambassador had so entirely lost his presence of mind now that he was face to face with disaster, which he had honestly tried to prevent, that he had not even noticed that he had taken with him two texts of the declaration of war which he was to present to the Russian Government, and he left them both on M. Sazonov's table. On that same evening, at eleven o'clock, the German troops crossed the Russian frontier at Kalisz in Poland. The news that war had been declared was at once communicated to the Press by the Russian Government, and at eight o'clock big placards to this effect appeared in the windows of the offices of the *Novoie Vremia* on the Nevski Prospekt. Immense crowds assembled also in front of the Kazan Cathedral, where they requested the clergy of that church to hold a service in the open air, in order to invoke the help of God for the triumph of Russian arms; the attitude of the public was extremely dignified and solemn. The soul of the nation had been profoundly moved; it felt that this was not the time to shout or hurrah; rather it was the hour to pray and to act. Till two o'clock in the morning the town remained astir, and the streets were thronged by anxious people exchanging impressions on the great event; but when the first detachments of troops for the front appeared on the Nevski no

one cheered; those who saw them pass uncovered themselves and made the sign of the Cross in silence.

I spent the evening at the office of the *Petersburg Courier*, and returned home through the crowded streets at about midnight, feeling quite crushed under the weight of the terrible catastrophe which had fallen on civilisation, and the consequences of which were to strike so deeply into my own heart by robbing me of the one whom I cherished most on earth. To my surprise, on getting home I found waiting for me one of my friends, a German officer who had been staying for the last few months in Petersburg. When I expressed my astonishment, he replied that he had not wanted to leave Russia before saying good-bye to me, and that he was going the next morning in the same train which was taking Count Pourtalès and the staff of the German Embassy to the frontier.

It was not the time for politeness or to spare each other's feelings. Moreover, I felt entirely unnerved, and so expressed myself rather more warmly than otherwise I would perhaps have done. I bluntly told my German friend that most probably his Emperor had gone mad, because nothing short of insanity could explain the course he had deemed it right to adopt.

"You are entirely mistaken," was his reply. "The Emperor is as sane as you and I; what has occurred to-day is the result of a carefully studied plan, and you may rest assured that what you call an adventure has left nothing to chance. On the contrary, every step already taken, and every one still to come, has been weighed and weighed again and again, until our General Staff can tell to a nicety all that is going to happen, as well as any possible development of the military situation."

"You surely do not imagine," I exclaimed, "that you can defeat us, allied as we are with France, and probably with England."

My friend smiled. "Look here," he went on, "argue,

if you like, that William II. is mad, but his Ministers are not mad, his Chancellor is not mad, the men at the head of our Staff are not mad. Do you think that they would have allowed him to engage in such a game if they did not feel absolutely certain he would win it? Don't forget that the whole existence of Germany is at stake; that this war will decide, not only her future, but also her independence as a nation. If she should be vanquished, then nothing will be left to her. She will disappear as a factor in European politics. This war has been forced upon her, not so much by the mobilisation of the Russian Army, as our public will say, as by that natural law of evolution which nothing created can escape. Germany must expand, must develop herself, even more than she has done already, both commercially and industrially, or else she will perish within a short time. We have been pursued by the hatred of Europe ever since 1870, and no one has ever forgiven us for having won at the point of the sword our position as a great nation. France as well as Russia has steadily prepared herself to war against us; England has repeatedly threatened us with her navy. We have known this for years, and if we have said nothing it was because we did not deem it wise to notice what we could not prevent. But it would have been criminal if we had not taken all possible measures to be able to meet the danger which we felt hovering over our heads. For some time we have been hoping that Russia, made wiser by her experiences in the Far East, would hesitate before playing into the hands of the French Chauvinists, but lately we have come to the conviction that she, too, was only waiting for an opportunity to fall upon us. It was our duty to forestall her, to take her unawares, just as she wished to take us unawares. I quite agree with you that the pretext chosen does not hold water, but at the same time I refuse to admit that we were not justified in seizing it."

"And this is the way you can talk after enjoying

Russian hospitality for months!" I exclaimed. "This is how you distort truth, and invent things which have never existed in order to excuse what history will fail to find words strong enough to condemn later on! Well, the only thing I can hope for is that these sophisms will crumble to pieces before long, because I refuse to admit that you can be the winner in this struggle, which you have started."

He smiled again an exasperating kind of smile that made me wish to strangle him.

"I am sorry for you, my poor friend," he said, "sorry for your illusions; they are bound to be destroyed rather than Germany cease to exist. I can quite well understand your feelings, and I am full of pity for you. But at the same time I think it is a duty to warn you, to open your eyes to the reality of the situation. War at the present time is entirely a scientific thing. Personal courage, which formerly decided its fate, is of no value whatever against all the wonderful appliances which we shall bring forward within a short time. I will willingly admit that your soldiers are all brave; that their power of endurance has never been equalled by any other army in the world; but of what avail before a cannon which kills at a distance of thirty-five miles; before heavy artillery which will pulverise the strongest fortress in a few days; before aeroplanes and Zeppelins, and explosive bombs that kill people long before their presence has been suspected?

"The war which has begun to-day will be the triumph of chemistry and engineering; not of personal courage or valour. And in those no nation in the whole world can compete with German science and culture... People think that we have prepared ourselves only from the military point of view—this is where they make their mistake. We have prepared ourselves scientifically and technically, and to try to beat us there is just as impossible as it would be for a hand-plough to work at the same pace as a steam engine. Man can always be conquered by machinery.

Therefore, personally, I feel no anxiety as to the ultimate issue of the war. No matter how many millions of men you have at your disposal, they will be devoured by the iron Minotaur born in Krupp's factories."

"And you can tell me such things unmoved?" I protested.

"Yes, because I would have you prepared for the worst. Time will prove to you that I was right, and you may perhaps think of me a year hence, when you and your country will be weeping together over disasters your Emperor would have been wiser to avoid by yielding to our wishes before it was too late."

"What use would it have been for him to do so, even if he had had so little dignity as to allow Russia to be trampled under Austria's heel, when you say yourself that it was a necessity for Germany to draw the sword against us?" I asked.

My friend replied nothing to this remark, but stood up to say goodbye. When he held out his hand to me I burst into tears. His words, though I did not believe them, had struck deeply into my heart, and I wondered whether we were really destined to be annihilated by the German monster who had attacked us in such an unwarrantable manner. I wondered also whether he knew more about our army than he cared to say! Strange misgivings began to shake my former conviction that the war, terrible as I knew it was bound to be, would still end in a complete triumph of our arms. I held out my hand to my visitor, nevertheless, feeling that, enemy though he had become, still I owed it to our former friendship to part from him with kind words and personal good wishes. He seemed to read my thoughts, because as he pressed my fingers into his own he said softly:

"Do not lose your courage—all will be well one day; but, remember, whatever successes your army may reap in the beginning, this day twelvemonth will see it entirely

crushed and defeated, and at our mercy. Now farewell, and may God watch over you and those who are dear to you!"

He kissed my hand and was gone before I had time to realise the full importance of his words. I was unfortunately to recall them more than once as time brought one sorrow after another to me, and to so many others, who, like me, were destined to see their loved ones fall on the battlefield, slain in all the vigour of their young manhood.

CHAPTER III.

PRESS; POLICE; PANIC.

I DO not think that many people slept that night in Petersburg; scarcely one family but had a son, brother, husband, father, relative or friend starting for the front. This war had come so unexpectedly that no one had been prepared for it, which made the blow harder to bear. In the first hours following upon the declaration of war, most were inclined to look at things through black spectacles. The remembrance of Russian reverses in the Far East haunted the public mind, and this caused doubts as to whether our army would be able to stand against the formidable forces of Germany and Austria. Consternation was general, but there was considerable dignity in the whole attitude of Russia on that eventful second day of August, 1914. The mobilisation went on quietly. Men going to their barracks were with their wives or mothers, but lamentations, of which Russian women of the lower classes are so fond as a rule, were absent. Everybody had taken up his or her particular share of the general burden with resignation. The streets of the capital presented a strange spectacle—quantities of troops everywhere and regiments continually parading from the Winter Palace to the Moscow railway station, singing religious hymns and patriotic anthems. No panic could be observed anywhere; even the workmen who, a few days before, had been on strike declared that they would stand by the government until the enemy was beaten—a resolution to which, unfortunately, they did not adhere, as events unfolded, but which at the moment was undoubtedly sincere.

At eleven o'clock the Emperor came to Petersburg from Peterhof, where he was residing, accompanied by the Empress and their four daughters, and they proceeded at once to the Chapel of the Winter Palace, where the Metropolitan Vladimir celebrated a religious service to invoke blessings upon the Russian arms, after which a deacon read out in loud voice the Imperial Manifesto announcing to the nation that Germany had attacked us.

The church was full to overflowing with officers of high rank and representatives of all the Guards' Regiments stationed in the capital. All were in field uniform, which the Sovereign also was wearing. In the hope of seeing the Tsar appear on the historical balcony from which all matters of importance that take place in the Imperial family are proclaimed to the population, an enormous crowd had assembled on the square and began singing prayers intermingled with national hymns. Flags were unfurled and ikons carried by women and priests. When the guns of the fortress announced that the Manifesto had been read, all crossed reverently, as Russians generally do on all grave occasions; blessings, too, were invoked on the head of the Emperor, and wishes uttered that he might come out victorious from this new and bloody war.

Inside the palace the enthusiasm was greater; Nicholas II. spoke a few words that rang with an emotion he tried vainly to subdue. His speech ended with the declaration that, since he had been obliged to draw the sword, he would not sheathe it until the last enemy had been driven out of his dominions. There were some people who afterwards said that this had been rather an imprudent assertion to make, as one had to take into account that the distinguishing feature of the German Army was the discipline, skill, and science of militarism. About two o'clock were thrown open the great doors leading to the balcony facing the square in front of the Winter Palace. The Tsar appeared, and behind him stood the Empress, with the young Grand

Duchesses dressed in white. Nicholas II. saluted his people and acknowledged their frenzied hurrahs. He spoke, but no one could catch his words; then he raised his hand in a gesture of benediction, whereon the multitude fell on its knees before him. The whole scene had a grandeur and gravity about it which made it very solemn and impressive, and one had the distinct feeling that the monarch and his people were entirely in unison, and that, after so many years of estrangement, Russia and the House of Romanoff had at last become reconciled, and determined to work together in order to resist the enemy.

The days which followed upon the declaration of war went by peacefully; trains carrying soldiers to the front left continually, but the hour of departure was never made public as the government very wisely wanted to prevent scenes of enthusiasm, which it felt would have been out of place at this initial stage of the campaign. So the troops were generally taken at night to the different railway stations, and embarked in silence, without anyone but the near relatives of officers being allowed to see them depart. The Red Cross, too, busied itself with the organisation of sanitary detachments, which were also being dispatched toward the German frontier, and with the arranging of ambulances and hospitals in Petersburg, where, at this early stage, it was intended to establish a central organisation for dealing with the wounded—an intention found, later on, to be impossible owing to the difficulty of transport from the field of action. Everybody was busy in some way, and everybody thought or believed that the campaign would be finished in a few weeks; therefore it behoved everyone to help the government that all at once had become popular. A great wave of patriotism was passing over the country, and for once the different parties seemed to be united in a common effort against the common foe. In those trying days Russia showed a most dignified attitude, and it is very much to be regretted that the government

and the Press did not emulate it, but seemed to excite passions better left dormant.

The first discordant note in the general determination to see the war to the bitter end came from the *Novoie Vremia*, the most Conservative and pro-government paper in Russia. It imagined that it was contributing its share to the public good by imploring its numerous readers to hunt down the Germans. It is perfectly true that the various tales which reached us concerning the attitude of the population of Prussia toward our compatriots travelling abroad when the war broke out were perfectly appalling. Everywhere Russians had been treated in the most shameful way possible, and insulted in a way unworthy of a civilised nation. But though this conduct called for reprisals, it was quite wrong to make it a pretext for encouraging seeming acts of brigandage. These only served our enemies, and it gave them opportunity again to retaliate by showering all kinds of ill-treatment on those Russians who, in the first moments of hostilities, had not been able to make good their escape from the realms of William II. All the solemnity, all the dignity of the war, was compromised by these hysterical Press outbursts, and it is a thousand times to be regretted that the government, instead of stopping these rabid attacks, thought it right and proper to encourage them.

The first example of this anti-German feeling was the sacking of the German Embassy. I happened to be passing through the Nevski Prospekt on that evening, and so can relate the circumstances from personal observation. One of the reporters of the *Novoie Vremia* appeared at the window and read aloud the official bulletin announcing that the Dowager Empress had been stopped at Berlin on her return to Russia, and obliged to change her route ; her train had been diverted to the Danish frontier by orders of the German Emperor. The news excited indescribable fury all over Russia ; but it would have been far better to allow

the country to digest it silently. All hope of that vanished when one of the members of the staff of the *Novoic Vremia* suddenly shouted: "Let us go to the Embassy, and show these people that we are not going to allow the mother of our Sovereign to be insulted." The crowd collected on the Nevski Prospekt took up these words, and soon one long cry was heard all through the street: "The Embassy! The Embassy!" The mob surged in the direction of Moika Street, and began to plunder the building with such alacrity that in the space of half an hour nothing but its walls were left standing. Everything of value in the Embassy was thrown out and burnt in the street; every window was broken, every picture damaged, every curtain taken down or rudely torn; and the two gigantic gladiators, with their horses, standing on the roof of the house were thrown into the canal in front, whence the fire brigade had to drag them out a few days later. The pillage was complete; even the dresses of the Countess von Pourtalès, which, in the hurry of her departure, had been forgotten, were torn into fragments. The infuriated crowd invaded the house, searched every corner, and finally murdered an official who had not had time to make his escape.

The occurrence was a most regrettable one, which could have been prevented by the police, had they wished to do so, instead of encouraging the rioters by remaining passive. The incident was most cleverly exploited by the German Press, which found in it an easy means of persuading its readers that Russia was really a barbarous nation that merited punishment.

From that day ridiculous persecutions began against everything or everybody who had anything to do with Germany or who bore a German name. The attention of the authorities, instead of being centralised on the commissariat and different departments responsible for the safe conduct of the war, was concentrated upon the task of eliminating everything German. It left spies, the real ones, severely

alone, for the simple reason that it was not clever enough to discover them. It annoyed and worried peaceful people, who were just as good patriots as any real Russian might have been, but who happened to have some German relatives, or who had forgotten to become Russian subjects when they settled in the land long years before. Curious things happened in that line. I saw an old lady expelled from Russia because she was still a German subject, though she had left her native country forty years before; she was accompanied to the station by her son, an officer in the Russian Army, who had his arm in a sling in consequence of a wound received at the battle of Tannenberg. One may well ask where is the spirit of discernment in such cases, especially if one takes into consideration that, whilst these useless persecutions were going on, German spies were openly sending reports on all that occurred in the General Staff, and furnished the German Government in detail with the plan of attack of the Russian Army, the knowledge of which allowed General von Hindenburg to inflict on us one defeat after another.

This spying system has done us the most harm in the whole campaign. Had our enemies not possessed the extraordinary sources of information which they had at their disposal concerning our doings, is it likely that we would have found ourselves thwarted at every step? It would then have been possible for us to take them by surprise, instead of being continually surprised by them. When all the incidents connected with the war become known to the general public, it will be seen that, not only our Staff, but also our commissariat and sanitary departments, found themselves from the very first invaded by those eager to furnish us with something that we wanted, and at the same time more anxious to use their eyes and ears in order to obtain valuable information which was immediately transmitted to Berlin.

One great reason, in my opinion, for the reverses in

Galicia, after the brilliantly successful storming of Lemberg, and the capture of the fortress of Przemysl, has been the cupidity of our officers, and especially the rapacity in our commissariat department, where, instead of providing for the welfare of the army, they only tried to make fortunes.

A curious feature in this anti-German agitation was the intensity with which it took hold of the public to the detriment of the war itself. The first month which followed upon the outbreak people kept interesting themselves in the movements of our troops. Then they left off doing so, and their whole attention seemed to concentrate upon the sayings and doings of those few unfortunate persons believed to have some kind of connection with Germany. Russia seemed suddenly to have become rabid with spy-mania, and Germany was made responsible for every foreign or internal trouble. Petersburg absorbed itself in hunting the German. This was a far too convenient episode for people not to exploit it in order to hide their own misdeeds. A couple of days after the pillage of the German Embassy a great friend of mine, since killed, who held an important post in the army, happened to be in Petersburg to report himself to his superiors. He called on me and we began discussing the situation. As to our chances of defeating the enemy, I was, of course, optimistically enthusiastic. It seemed to my ignorant eyes that it would be quite impossible for the armies of William II., even when backed by those of his tottering Austrian Ally, to be able to hold their own against the might of our military resources, in alliance with those of France—England had not yet entered the fray. To my intense surprise, my friend did not seem to share my conviction that all was bound to go well, and when I expressed the hope that the New Year would find us resting after the physical and mental fatigues of the war, he simply smiled and asked me whether I were serious in supposing that the war could be over in a few months.

"Certainly I am serious," I replied. "I do not think for a single moment that anything can stop our army on its march towards Berlin; and once Berlin is taken then peace will quickly follow."

"Once Berlin is taken," he repeated. "But it is there precisely that the difficulty lies; I fear that Warsaw may be in the hands of the Prussians sooner than Berlin in ours."

"Surely you are joking," was my remark. "They will never be able to advance so far as Warsaw."

"They are already in Kalisz, my friend," he replied.

"Yes, I know, but Kalisz is an open town; moreover, we had no troops to defend it, as it ought to have been. But Warsaw is a different thing altogether. Warsaw is a capital. It is the centre of government in the kingdom of Poland. It has a large garrison and presents such an important position for us that we shall always defend it, and defend it successfully, no matter what it costs. Besides, taking Warsaw would mean that we have collapsed in East Prussia as well as in Galicia, and this is not likely at all. If once we take Lemberg, then we shall be the masters of the situation, and I do not see what is to prevent us taking Lemberg. Nearly the whole of the German Army is on the Western frontier."

"How mistaken you are!" was the unexpected reply. "You will allow me some knowledge in regard to military affairs. You know also that I was in Berlin for practically two years, and studied hard in the offices of their Staff, acquainting myself with the intricacies of the German system. In Germany they have an incontestable advantage over us in their efficiency of organisation, and the care which they take never to allow any detail, however insignificant, to escape them. One may say Germany is a huge machine, but still the best trained machine the world has ever seen, and how can mere men fight a machine? Warfare, to the German, has absolutely nothing to do with personal courage, or those dashing qualities formerly

considered indicative of the good soldier. Warfare is knowledge how to handle a mass of most complicated machinery created in order to crush any who try to stand up against it. Warfare consists, first, in the accumulation of munitions and commissariat, and then in the perfect training and discipline of armies. We possess none of these things. Our army is brave and obedient, but not disciplined. Our army lacks initiative; it only knows how to obey blindly, and to die when told it must do so. A very beautiful but quite unavailing heroism. A perfect knowledge of what one ought to do under certain conditions, and how to face certain responsibilities, would be far more to the point. That is precisely what our officers lack and where our army fails; we are not, as the Germans are, imbued from our school days with the spirit of scientific militarism, and this war is going to be fought on scientific grounds, and with scientific weapons, more than with personal courage or valour."

"You think, then, that we are going to be beaten?" I asked, with dismay.

"I will not say that," he replied, "but I believe that the fight will be far more stubborn and terrible than we imagine. This war has been brought about by the German Emperor and his advisers at a time when no one except themselves wished for it. If they have decided on such a step —of the gravity of which they must have been aware—it is because they believe that they have considerable chance of success. Remember one thing: we are still a young people, and we can suffer reverses and not be very greatly the worse for them; whereas Germany stakes her whole existence, not only as a military power, but as a Power. Do you suppose she would have risked such an adventure if she had not held most of the trump cards in her hand? It is childish to say that she has lost her senses; far better would it be to try to find out what are the resources upon which she relies to emerge triumphantly out of the gigantic struggle. A careful study of what Krupp is doing in his

factories would be of more use to us than all the enthusiasm we are trying to kindle among our troops."

"What do you know?" I asked.

"Know? Not much beyond what everybody knows; but I suspect a great deal, and fear even more terrible things than I suspect. Our Staff is inefficient in these matters, and our Intelligence Department spends its energies upon work that ought to be left to the police. It orders the searching of inoffensive people's homes; it tries to find something criminal in newspaper articles; it incriminates a word of sympathy, often said thoughtlessly, but overheard by a spy. Yet it forgets to watch over the actions of our enemy; it opens the doors of our military institutions to all kinds of suspicious people, who, under the pretext of offering goods to sell, simply gather information which, nine times out of ten, intelligence officers themselves give to them quite innocently, and without realising that it might be of use to the enemy. The misfortune of Russia is that, by nature, we are a straightforward people, unsuspecting of evil in others."

"What has that got to do with the conduct of the war?" I asked.

"Everything and nothing," was the reply. "If certain of those in responsible positions knew they were vigilantly watched there would be less corruption and more sense of duty. Upon this country of ours, my dear friend, lies a curse; a curse which already has caused many of its misfortunes, but which, it is hoped, this war will help to remove by opening the eyes of some of our responsible parties. That curse is the policing system, which has been exalted into a means of repressive government. There is the mistake. The police ought to preserve order among the public; it ought never to be given the power to control the existence of that public—especially if, as is the case with us, it is so badly paid that it finds itself almost compelled to seek for means of existence outside of its own resources."

"But what has the police to do with the conduct of the war?" I exclaimed.

"Far more than you think or suppose. Its system has been erected into a kind of principle, and the spirit of it has penetrated into our Intelligence Department, which thinks that by conforming to police methods it can rid Russia of all its enemies. It therefore spends its time in reading reports fabricated half the time by officials, who record in them their own personal grudges against the victims whom they denounce; and, spending so much time in this way, the department ignores the very people whose presence constitutes a danger to the general welfare. Germans understand this perfectly well, and they succeed in getting their information at first hand, and are doing it with impunity. We are beginning this war in a very handicapped condition, and though I hope, with you, that we will emerge triumphantly, yet I feel certain that we shall have to submit to many reverses, and that the task before us is by no means light.

"Another point to which I should like to draw your attention is the way in which commanding officers, nine times out of ten, make their calculations on former impressions and obsolete information, without verifying or comparing with the present state of things. Maps are consulted not nearly so frequently as they should be, and the work of reconnoitring the enemy's position is, more often than could be wished, done by inexperienced officers, who trust more to their personal judgment and personal courage than to securing the calculated precision of detail which the Germans never omit. I am sadly afraid in this war that Russia will pit heroic but useless courage against murderous instruments that will prove to be the stronger forces."

"I do hope that you are mistaken," I exclaimed; "it would be too terrible to think that."

"Ah, my friend, this war is going to surprise us in more ways than one," said my visitor.

"I never expected you to take a despondent view of it,"

I replied. "Are you really so convinced of the superiority of the German Army?"

"Of its superiority as an army, and as a fighting instrument, not at all," he said. "Our soldiers are better fighters, and have far more endurance and strength of character than the Germans; and being more used to hardships of every kind are also physically healthier. But whereas with us nearly everything is left to chance, our adversaries apply all their energies entirely to eliminate this factor from their calculations. Their organisation is wonderful, and their discipline, in the sense that no one ever ventures to question the reason for which any order is given, is above all praise. They have so dissected war that all its intricacies have become as familiar to them as the human body is to an expert surgeon. Their plans are based on calculations equal in minuteness to those of an astronomer when measuring the distance between two stars. Whether we shall be able to cope with them technically is the whole question, and, frankly speaking, I do not think we shall."

"Then you admit the possibility of a reverse?"

"Yes, if our enemies drag on the campaign; because, in that case, and especially if there are reverses, the nation will lose faith in its leaders, and the revolutionary elements in it, partly by the failure of a government they have always hated, and partly through the agency of German emissaries, of whom there exist far more than the government suspects, will come to the front once more and oblige the Emperor to conclude peace. It is there that I see the greatest danger for the future; and unfortunately this danger is daily increased by the foolish policy adopted by our Staff, to send into exile in the interior of Russia all the Germans they can lay their hands upon. It gives them just the chance they want to poison the minds of the country people with their words and criticisms. Far better to have sent them at once across the frontier."

"You exaggerate, my friend," I remarked.

"I do not think so," he insisted, "and as events go on you will find my apprehensions justified. To come back to the war, I feel certain it will be a long affair—which, however, will collapse very quickly in the end. A great source of danger for the Russian Army lies in the fact that its Commander-in-Chief is the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch. It is always unwise to have at the head of the army a prince of the blood royal, whose privileged position puts him above any criticism and surrounds him with flattery."

"You do not like him?" I asked.

"I neither like nor dislike him. He may be a great general, as so many people say, but so far he has given no proofs that such is the case, and this war is far too serious for us to indulge in the luxury of experiments. It seems he is a great disciplinarian, and can treat with extreme severity those who do not execute his orders; but I question whether he is made of that stuff which is capable of inflaming the masses, and inspiring an army to fight its way through every obstacle. Considering the fact that technically we are far inferior to the Germans, it would be a distinct advantage for us to have at our head a general like Skobelev, who could lead his troops to victory, but showing them that he was sharing their danger. The Grand Duke must never expose his person to peril, because he is a member of the Imperial Family. There are in war moments of crisis when the knowledge that their leader has staked his life inspires troops with a heroism which otherwise they would never display. I repeat, we could win this campaign, and we should do so, backed as we are by powerful and strong Allies; but the internal conditions to which the war will give birth may oblige us to conclude peace before either Russia or our friends abroad wish it; and this may bring about the fall, not only of the present system of government, but even of the dynasty itself. I have told you what I think, and I pray to God that I may be mistaken."

He got up and as he took leave of me I felt as if were departing a wicked fairy whose object had been to destroy all the bright illusions which I had been cherishing. For the first time since the beginning of the war I shuddered at the possibility of reverses which no one save the friend whose words I have just repeated had ever suggested in my presence. And yet on that same day we heard that our troops had occupied Insterburg in Eastern Prussia and, according to the accounts published by the Press, were marching victoriously on toward Berlin ; toward a victory, the completeness of which not a soul in the whole of Russia doubted at that time.

CHAPTER IV.

The Horror of Tannenberg.

During the first few days which followed the conversation related in the previous chapter, the painful impression there expressed remained until removed by the continuance of good news from the Front. The war had certainly begun for us under very favourable conditions, and when the German invasion of Belgium caused England to join in the struggle, I began to share the feeling which was general in Russia, that the war would soon be over. We all believed that most of the German forces were gathered at the French frontier and in Belgium, whilst Eastern Prussia was left practically undefended, for it was toward Eastern Prussia that our activities were directed by the Grand Duke. He attacked with a vigour that promised great things, and everybody felt convinced that peace would be signed in Berlin before Christmas.

A few days after the news of the invasion of Belgium had reached us, a party of French reservists left Petersburg for Odessa, whence a steamer was to carry them to Marseilles to join their regiments. Some friends of mine being among them I went to the railway station to wish them God-speed, and was rather unpleasantly impressed by the sight of a tall dark woman, with strong, masculine features, who was standing on a stool waving a tricolour flag, and shouting at the top of her voice, "à Berlin à Berlin!" This reminded me of the unfortunate war of 1870, when the streets of Paris resounded with the same cry. It seemed an act of desecration to count upon it before the event had really happened.

I was not the only one in whom the words of the dark woman created this sensation, because an acquaintance of mine, whom I happened to meet, also expressed himself in the same way.

The last passenger with whom I shook hands was the correspondent of the Havas Agency, M. Troubat, whom I had met at a dinner party a few days before the declaration of war, and who had spoken to me of his approaching marriage. Alas! he was to be one of the first victims of the campaign; he fell gloriously during one of the engagements on the Marne. He was young, full of life, had done very well in his profession, and looked forward to a brilliant future, but the bullets of the enemy did not spare him.

We did not think of such sad things as death during those first days of elation. Even the disastrous news which telegrams brought us concerning the first atrocities committed in Belgium left us indifferent. We thought that they would afford us another powerful excuse to crush German militarism completely out of existence, and we began to belittle the Prussians: of course, we conceded, they had had some successes in France, and their march on Paris had been very cleverly carried through in order to terrify the Parisians and the rest of Europe; but had it not been gloriously repulsed by the clever strategy of General Joffre? Besides, any temporary successes which they might obtain would fail in the long run, and they would be compelled to defend their own capital. I even heard some responsible people seriously discuss the conditions of peace we were going to impose, and express apprehension lest our government might be too lenient.

In the meanwhile the Germans, whose strength was so generally despised, had taken Liége after a few days' fight, and also captured Namur. Vague rumours reached us concerning a wonderful heavy gun which the Germans had suddenly produced, the effects of which were quite astounding; but no one believed in the existence of such a weapon.

With complete unanimity, too, Russians declared that though it were impossible to help either France or Belgium, our own troops would soon put everything right when they reached Berlin and obliged the Emperor William to fly from his capital.

The Duma and the Council of State assembled to vote the necessary credits for the war. Before the business began they had been received in solemn audience in the Winter Palace by the Emperor, who spoke of the necessity of the country to remain united in the presence of the enemy, and of his conviction that the representatives of the people would help him without reserve in his heavy task. The words of the sovereign were received with great enthusiasm, and for the first time, perhaps, since his accession to the throne, Nicholas II. found himself popular with all parties in Russia. Later on, when M. Sazonov and the Prime Minister, M. Gorémykin, explained to the Duma the details of the negotiations which had led to the war, they were applauded vigorously, and the Ambassadors of England and France, who were present, received quite an ovation from the Deputies and on arrival from the populace outside. Already Insterburg had been occupied, and with word of an engagement with the Prussian troops at Eydtkhunen came the inspiring news that the French troops had entered Mulhouse. This only added to the enthusiastic send-off given to a considerable number of troops, including the principal Guard regiments, who left Petersburg for German and Austrian frontiers.

Three proclamations by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch, the Commander-in-Chief, addressed to the Poles, the inhabitants of the Austrian provinces bordering on our frontiers, and the Ruthenians of Galicia, were published and caused astonishment in Petersburg. No one could understand how it came about that the Grand Duke and not the Emperor had signed them. The first criticisms which I heard addressed to the government were uttered

on the subject of these proclamations, which were certainly premature, seemed to have no object, and were bound, later, to excite discontent in Poland. One heard, indeed, that the Emperor was going to Moscow, whence he would issue a manifesto announcing to the nation the occupation of Galicia, and the creation of a new Kingdom of Poland. But this rumour existed only in the imagination, and though the sovereign did visit Moscow he merely spoke on the war in a general way. The English and French Ambassadors accompanied the sovereign; they both returned very satisfied with their reception in the ancient city, and convinced that the Romanoff dynasty was more popular than ever in Russia.

Very early in the war it was felt by the more far-seeing of Russian patriots that the officials in Petersburg were depending too much on the anticipation that our soldiers would defeat the Austrian forces, and also upon the active sympathy of the people of Galicia and Bukovina, where, for years, Russian propagandism had been active. It turned out, however, that both these hopes were by no means so near realisation as the Press led us to believe. In the meanwhile Japan had joined the Allies and declared war on Germany. Many in Petersburg thought some secret design lay at the back of this step, but very soon the seizure of Tsing Tau was to prove to Europe that when Japan had sided with her European friends she had only done so in order to cover the Allies' planned attack on German China.

The news of the fall of Liége was kept secret as long as possible by the Russian Censor; we heard, indeed, that the town was holding out and its circle of forts were withstanding the enemy. Yet it was given out officially that the Belgian Government and the Court had fled to Antwerp; but this the people in their optimism said meant nothing at all—it was but a wise precaution!

Suddenly, like a bombshell, the terrible news of the battle of Tannenberg (August 26th) burst upon us.

The official communication spoke of two army corps enveloped by the enemy and nearly annihilated by superiority of numbers. A long list of killed and wounded added to the horror of this first disclosure of a disaster the details of which only became known much later. The crude facts are that when our troops invaded Eastern Prussia and began their triumphant march, the few Prussian regiments which were there slowly retreated before them, apparently leaving a free field. We all, and, what is more important, the Grand Duke and his Staff too, thought that this retreat meant fear, and a desire to concentrate the army still at the disposal of the Emperor William in Germany itself around Berlin, in order to defend the capital.

In reality, nothing of the kind was ever intended by the German Staff. General von Hindenburg, who at that critical moment was called upon to take the command of the Prussian armies on the Russian frontier, determined to allow our troops to proceed as far as the Mazurian country, which is full of lakes and swamps of a most dangerous kind, and there meet and destroy them. With diabolical ability the Prussians built new roads and obliterated old ones. These new roads were cunningly devised to lead any who ventured upon them into the swamps. And some were so constructed that they would collapse under the weight of heavy artillery and baggage. When the first Russian detachments appeared the Prussians retired as quickly as they could, and then left their pursuers to their fate.

It is here that the incompetency of the Russian Staff became evident and disastrous. Had the officers studied their maps they would have seen that the "lie" of the country they were going through was not the same as that traced on the maps. This circumstance alone ought to have put them on their guard. The Intelligence Department, too, ought to have had knowledge of the work which had been going on. Roads are not built in a day; and quick as were the enemy's pioneers they were at work for some

time, and, had proper precautions been taken, our leaders ought most certainly to have suspected that the promptitude with which the German forces retreated before us had a sinister meaning. But no one thought of such things; everybody was persuaded that we were sweeping everything before us on the road to Berlin, and that the Prussians had been taken so unawares by the rapidity of our march that their one thought was for their personal safety. When the two army corps lead by General Samsonov marched into this treacherous road, they believed that no resistance was awaiting them; all the more appalling therefore became the catastrophe which followed. Our army was snared in the swamp almost before it realised what was happening. Regiment after regiment became engulfed in that black mud. Men as well as horses were slowly sucked down into the abyss. A few columns, amongst others the one led by the heroic General Mrozowsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Moscow Grenadiers, managed to struggle through the lakes and fight their way through a strong detachment of German infantry that tried to block the road before them and to drive them back into the deadly swamp. But the majority of the army perished. For a whole week they struggled in a hopeless effort to disengage themselves, fighting against death with admirable courage. The cries of agony of the doomed creatures who were being slowly suffocated by an implacable enemy, more merciless than any human one, resounded through the countryside, and filled with horror the souls of those who found themselves compelled to listen without being able to help. So utterly terrible was the whole tragedy that it is recorded that some Prussian officers, whom their duty obliged to keep watch on this scene, went mad during that time and could never afterwards hear the name of Tannenberg mentioned without shuddering. General von Hindenburg remained unmoved. He had been told to deliver Eastern Prussia from its invaders; he had done so, and did not care at what cost

At last, after seven days of this suffering, the Germans were moved to some spark of mercy and, bringing up their big guns, fired among the dying masses of Russians, to complete the destruction which the dark waters of the Mazurian lakes had begun.

For months people worked to remove the traces of the charnel into which the whole region had been transformed. Men were paid as much as fifteen or twenty marks per day to remove the dead bodies, but even this large remuneration did not tempt many, so horrible was the task. As for the guns and the baggage, they are still buried in the swamps, and probably will be for ever. When General Samsonov, to whose carelessness the completeness of the disaster was due, saw that all was lost he blew out his brains rather than face his superiors. The head of his staff, General Pestitch, and all his colleagues perished together in the lake, as did, too, the Commander of the Second Army Corps, General Martos. Two crack cavalry regiments belonging to the Guards lost nearly all their officers, but succeeded in getting through and joining the headquarters of the army, absolutely exhausted and unnerved. The result of this disastrous day was the almost complete annihilation of two army corps, and the demoralisation of all the troops which had taken part in the unexpected catastrophe.

When the news of the battle of Tannenberg reached Petersburg, the government had not yet assumed its policy of secrecy, but it was difficult to keep from the knowledge of the public the fact that a setback of some kind had taken place, especially in view of the circumstance that so many of the fallen officers belonged to the best families in Russia, and formed part of the *jeunesse dorée* of Petersburg. The majority of the public heard nothing concerning the details of Tannenberg, and thought that a regular battle had taken place there which had not turned to our advantage. The dark truth was concealed.

The Press, obeying orders from the War Office, mini-

mised the catastrophe by extolling the courage and heroism displayed by our troops, and by trumpeting the firm intention of the authorities not to hide anything from the nation. It gave lavish praise to the devotion of the officers and soldiers who had perished in the performance of their duty, and then the whole attention of the public was directed to Galicia, where grave and most serious events were going on. One newspaper, the *Retsch*, tried to explain the disaster of Tannenberg in a plausible way, but in the article the cruel ignorance in which Russia was kept as to details connected with the conduct of the war became apparent.

"If we analyse the communications of the Commander-in-Chief," proceeds the article, "we come to the conclusion that the excellent forces of the enemy to which he alludes in his message are the reinforcements which, we were told yesterday, had appeared in the neighbourhood of Osterode. The attack which was made upon our troops took place near the frontier of the Governments of Plock and of Lomza, in the neighbourhood of Soldau and Meidenburg. Our soldiers were surprised on their way by these fresh reserves which were thrown upon them, and by the fire of their heavy artillery, which evidently had been brought for that purpose from the fortresses of Thorn and of Graudenz. These reserves, to the strength and number of which we owe our defeat, were probably composed of men belonging to the Landwehr and the Landsturm, which hitherto have been kept in the background in order to be employed only when a total destruction of the German Army by our forces was threatened.

"In general," went on the paper, "the sad events which our Staff communicates to us cannot have any influence on the course of the war, nor on our operations in Eastern Prussia; they cannot weaken our army, and they ought neither to influence our morale, nor make us doubt the ultimate success of the campaign. In every war one

must expect to sustain some heavy losses, and though the position of our troops has been for the moment compromised and weakened, it cannot be considered as having become perilous in any way."

As a complement to this article may be quoted the official communication emanating from the Grand Duke's Staff. This shows in what manner it attempted to tell the public about Tannenberg:

"Owing to strong reinforcements drawn by our enemy from every side, facilitated by the network of railways which they control, German forces threw themselves on two of our army corps and subjected them to the strong fire of their heavy artillery, inflicting great losses. Our troops fought most heroically, and Generals Samsonov, Martos, Pestitch, and several officers from the staff have perished. The Commander-in-Chief believes most firmly that God will help us in our most energetic measures to remedy this sad occurrence."

It was following upon this disastrous battle of Tannenberg that the first signs of apprehension concerning the future of the campaign began to be entertained by people in certain circles not enthusiastic about the military talents of the Grand Duke Nicholas. But even these sceptics did not believe in the possibility of defeat. The extent of their apprehension was that the campaign might prove unexpectedly long and tedious. Everyone relied very much upon our Allies, and especially on Lord Kitchener, who inspired unbounded confidence and was admired by all. The British Navy was looked upon as the principal element of success which we had at our disposal, and even the most stubborn adversaries of the Government breathed more freely when they heard that Russia, England and France had bound themselves by a solemn compact not to conclude a separate peace. This seemed to convey in itself a promise of victory; and, indeed, who could at this stage of the campaign suppose that it would prove to be anything else than

that the definite defeat of German militarism was ultimately assured?

As I have related already, the whole attention of the public became concentrated upon Galicia, where the Grand Duke had thrown the whole weight of our armies. He guessed, quite rightly, that the vulnerable point of our enemies lay in the weakness of the Austrian troops. The Austrians had at first occupied certain portions of the so-called Kingdom of Poland—the province of Lublin—and we had considerable trouble to dislodge them; but once on their own ground they had broken down in what seemed an almost incredible manner. Events proved, later on, that the cause of this sudden collapse had been the utter incapacity of the officers, who, owing to the happy-go-lucky way in which they considered everything, had failed to grasp the determination with which Russia invaded Austrian territory. Besides this, the German Staff still believed that it could allow the Austrians to act independently, and could trust them to bring into execution the plan which had been settled by mutual agreement. The Austrians, however, showed themselves miserable tacticians, and defeat upon defeat followed, until Berlin, exasperated by the succession of reverses which gave up the whole of Galicia into Russian hands, insisted upon the Austrian troops being led by Prussian officers. After this, things most unfortunately changed for us; we were obliged to evacuate Galicia, and thus were stultified our enormous sacrifices to conquer the region.

Hostilities against Austria were conceived upon a considerable scale, and were executed with great talent and knowledge by General Roussky, the commander of the troops forming part of the Kiev army, who showed singular perspicacity and great decision in all the operations which he executed. The Austrians thought that by attacking us with all their forces they would be able to prevent our mobilisation being accomplished in time, and thus,

from the outset, secure a very real advantage. They began by attacking and taking Lublin and Chelm, with the evident intention to force our lines from the West to cross the Bug, and thus attack from the rear the army which we were concentrating around Warsaw, and in flank the troops which we had sent into Eastern Prussia. To be able to execute this movement, the Austrians developed their forces on a front of more than 150 versts*, occupying and leaning on the following points, which they had strongly fortified: Zavilost, Janov, Bilgoraj, Tomaszov, and Belcez.

To accomplish this very important operation it was indispensable, however, to protect the right wing of the Austrian Army from the possibility of an attack by the Russian troops occupying the Kiev military district. In order to do this, the intention of the Austrian commanders had been to bring forward the second Austro-Hungarian Army, composed of the third, eleventh and twelfth corps, and five cavalry divisions. According to the reckonings of the Austrian Staff, the mobilisation of the Austro-Hungarian Army, as well as its concentration in South Galicia, ought to have been accomplished on the fourteenth day after the order for the general mobilisation had been issued; but two weeks after war had begun the Austrians had not succeeded in gathering all their forces. This delay placed our enemies in a worse strategical position than they had imagined possible, and they found themselves compelled to reinforce the troops which they had in South Galicia by bringing up part of their seventh, thirteenth and fourteenth corps, amounting to twelve divisions of infantry, and a few brigades of Landsturm and some cavalry and artillery—approximately 220,000 to 230,000 men,—who were instructed to cover the operations that had been entrusted to the main body occupying Southern Galicia. In the meanwhile the Russian mobilisation had been effected far more quickly than our adversaries had anticipated, and already, on the

* A verst is 1161⅔ yards.

16th of August, a bare fortnight following the declaration of war by Austria upon Russia, the army forming part of the Kiev military district had developed itself around Lutzk, Dubno and Proskurov—that is, on a front extending to something like 175 versts—and began steadily marching toward the enemy's territory.

During seventeen days these troops, which formed the left wing of our main army, covered a space of 220 versts, or something like thirteen versts per day, fighting nearly the whole of the time. If one takes into account that troops on the march in peaceful times are not supposed to cover more than fifteen versts in twenty-four hours, whilst we managed to do thirteen, fighting and forcing all kinds of obstacles, Russia may justly feel proud of the endurance shown by our soldiers upon this occasion, where everything depended on the promptitude of our movements.

The main forces of our enemy in South Galicia were gathered together in a very strongly fortified position at Kamenka and Kalisz, and extended upon a front of more than 110 versts. We attacked this position, and after a most desperate struggle, which lasted several days, the Austrians were completely routed on September 1st. They lost something like a hundred and thirty thousand men, killed and wounded, whilst, in addition, two hundred guns and vast quantities of ammunition were left in our hands.

After this defeat, due to the clever strategy of General Roussky, who was most ably seconded by General Broussiloff, the commander of the Second Army engaged in Galicia, the principal Austrian forces reassembled opposite Opol and Belcez, but they did not succeed in establishing themselves on a wide front. We had crossed the frontier on the 19th of August, and fought all the time from that day to the moment when at last we entered Lemberg. Our march forward was very difficult, owing to the many small rivers, affluents of the Dniester, which had to be crossed, as well

as to the various fortified points that we had to take by storm ; but already, on the 20th of August (September 2nd), our army found itself in sight of Lemberg, the forts of which showed no resistance whatever, and on the 21st of August (3rd of September), at eleven o'clock in the morning, the town itself was taken by our troops after a short engagement. The greatest success of the campaign had been achieved with relatively very little loss, and the name of General Roussky became famous all over Russia.

The brilliant success of the operations undertaken in Galicia was considered to be ample compensation for the disaster of Tannenberg, the real extent of which was never known in the country at that time.

The Grand Duke Nicholas immediately telegraphed the good news of Lemberg to the Emperor, asking the Tsar to award the Cross of St. George, of the third class, a most rare distinction, to General Roussky. All over Russia solemn thanksgiving services were celebrated, and great manifestations of joy as well as popular demonstrations took place in Petersburg and in Moscow. People began speaking of the invincible Russian armies and expected to hear every day that we were on the road to Vienna, if not in actual possession of that capital. In the general joy it was entirely forgotten that Germany existed, and through the glasses of a rose-coloured optimism she was seen already conquered just as completely as her Austrian ally. As for our reverses in Eastern Prussia, they had already sunk into insignificance, the more so that, as a revenge for all the horrors of Tannenberg, the Emperor had seen fit to change the name of Petersburg into the truly Russian " Petrograd," and the government had forbidden German to be spoken in the streets or to be taught in schools. Surely this was enough to satisfy the most fervent patriot !

CHAPTER V.

Behind the Scenes.

After the victories in Galicia, the Russian public divided itself into two camps. The optimists anticipated all the triumphs which their ambition and patriotism longed for. The other party, much smaller, but unquestionably better informed, did not air its opinions too openly. These people whispered into the ears of their friends that the first battles had revealed a lamentable want of organisation on our side. The wounded, for instance, after a rather sharp engagement fought near Gumbinnen, in Eastern Prussia, had to be transported a distance of 120 versts in automobiles before being attended to, whilst all the time an ambulance was stationed quite near to the battlefield, and remained the whole time doing nothing.

The first plan of the Russian Staff had been to wait for the enemy in our own territory, and the Red Cross, in consequence, had an organisation of ambulances scattered at about sixty versts from the frontier. When everything was changed, and the Grand Duke decided to take the offensive by invading Eastern Prussia, all the necessary arrangements were made, but the medical services received no orders to move, so remained where they were. When men began to fall they found themselves utterly unprovided with even field dressings. Half the casualties in the first engagements succumbed from want of early care. This state of things was remedied later, but the Red Cross, for which millions were given all over Russia, still remained badly organised.

The different base hospitals, however, worked wonders, and proved most useful. On the other hand, the Commissariat, which had proved so deficient during the 1904 campaign, was found above praise, and the soldiers, notwithstanding what may have been written in German papers concerning this subject, were well fed and well clothed, and generally well attended to in regard to their physical wants. If they collapsed as quickly as was the case after the fights in the Carpathians and in Galicia, this must not be attributed to the fact that they had nothing to eat, but to the stopping of the distribution of vodka to the troops. I know that in saying so I shall be severely criticised, but I must maintain that the total prohibition of spirits in the great war of 1914 was the cause of the Russian army not being able to make a better stand against the enemy, and especially explains the large number of prisoners made by the Germans. It must not be forgotten that the Russian was the largest consumer of spirits in the whole of the world. The nation was saturated with vodka. The Russian soldier was so used to the stimulant that he felt entirely powerless when deprived of it suddenly. Much has been written concerning this general prohibition, which was issued on the first day of the war, but I am certain that the German officer who told me that it proved the best auxiliary Prussia had found to help her in her progress in Poland, spoke the truth. An excellent thing in itself, of course, the prohibition was applied—as so many other excellent things are in Russia—in the worst manner imaginable. It would have been far better to allow a moderate supply of spirits to the army than to have left the soldiers cold and drenched in the trenches during the whole of the severe winter, without the possibility of a nip of vodka to revive their faculties, and to inspire them with courage. I have visited prisoners' camps in Germany, and spoken with our Russian soldiers interned there; and whenever I have asked them

when and how they had fallen into the enemy's hands I have received the reply that "I don't know; I was so tired that I don't remember anything." Now I feel convinced that everyone who knows Russia, the Russian character, and the Russian army, will agree with me when I say that these same men would never have become so limp, no matter what hardships they had been compelled to endure, if from time to time they had received a glass of vodka to sustain them in their work. The Germans—and this is another precaution which they know so well how to take, and another proof of their extraordinary organisation—though dealing most severely with every case of drunkenness which came before their notice in the army, yet were very careful after every heavy engagement to distribute a rum-ration to the troops, before allowing them to rest after the excitement of the battle, or after a long stay in the trenches; whereas our poor soldiers were left to freeze in the cold for hours, and then were only given cold food. At the risk of scandalising all the adversaries of alcohol, I must nevertheless repeat that I regret our High Command did not see its way to follow the example of our enemies. However, this is a digression.

Our Commissariat worked well, especially in the beginning of the war. Afterwards things were not quite so easy, especially during the retreat from Galicia. The accusation, made even in Russia, that the troops were left to starve was utterly false. The soldier was well fed, and was always properly clothed. Only—only the government paid about five times, if not ten times, more than it ought to have done for everything, thanks to the greed of officials in the Commissariat department. These gentlemen thought the war an excellent opportunity—indeed, one which would never return—for them to become rich at once, without the least trouble. Those of high rank, those in leading positions in this strange administration—

everybody, down to the humblest clerk—managed to make money out of every purchase for the army. I shall give one instance among many as to how prices were inflated. An American company offered to the government one million pairs of boots at the price of three dollars per pair; eight dollars each was paid. Consequently, on this one transaction five million dollars remained in the pockets of the intermediaries and the officials of the Commissariat departments.

In Petrograd I have spoken with officers belonging to this much abused department; and a friend of mine, an Englishman, in whose words I have the most implicit confidence, told me he had observed the same thing. Many hundreds of thousands of roubles have gone this way; never, indeed, was squandering of the public funds seen on such a scale as during this ill-fated campaign.

With it all, however, the soldier was not left in want. Boots with paper soles, such as were distributed to the army in France in 1870, were not seen. Everything the troops got was of good quality, and they never, save on rare occasions, suffered from hunger. It is the cost to the public exchequer that would certainly not stand investigation.

The people to whom these facts were known were therefore not sanguine as to the progress of the war. But, of course, they never dared mention their apprehensions publicly, as instantly they would have been branded as bad patriots, if not as German agents.

This second party was averse to the Grand Duke Nicholas being Commander-in-Chief, partly because they very justly said that, in the case of reverses, it would be most difficult to fix responsibility upon a member of the Imperial Family, partly because they did not think he possessed the necessary qualities and military talents essential to fight such tacticians as the Germans.

The second party was also in opposition to the govern-

ment, whom it accused of spending its whole time in looking about for spies where these did not exist; and of applying police methods where a strong and just sense of the necessities of the moment would have been better. The fact is, that the Minister of the Interior, M. Maklokov, was not capable of guiding the chariot of the State through troublous times, and that these were critical not even his supporters denied.

Even in those early days of the war the one thing which the government dreaded was the outbreak of a revolution. Thus obsessed, the government gave all its attention to crushing every manifestation of discontent, and overlooked the necessity of making an intelligent stand against the aggression of the Austro-German troops in Poland. The Press was subjected to the closest surveillance; a formidable censorship was exercised on private correspondence; detectives swarmed everywhere; private life was examined as it had never been before; and every individual suspected of German sympathies, or of liberal opinions, was immediately dispatched to some far-away province, unless he or she happened to have enough influence to obtain the favour of being asked to go abroad till after the cessation of hostilities.

There is a proverb that "If you scratch the Russian you will find a Tartar"; it would be more to the point to say of the official class that if you scratch a Russian you find a detective. Take, for instance, what was done in Galicia after our victories in that region. Instead of trying to win the sympathies of the population, especially the Ruthenians, who had always been inclined in our favour, owing to the similarity of religion, we at once set to work to restrain freedom, and to make the people feel our yoke in every possible way. The result was that when, after ten months, we found ourselves obliged to evacuate Lemberg, the town welcomed our enemies with an enthusiasm that spoke volumes, and not one word of

regret was expressed at our departure, even by those who, before the war, had been our most fervent partisans. Once more our detestable government compromised all the heroism displayed by our valiant army, and this at a time when it ought to have worked together with it in order to enhance our prestige abroad.

These facts were recognised by those to whom I have referred as the second party. They also regretted that the war was not seized as the psychological opportunity to introduce a liberal system of government. Great Britain had never been very much liked before, except by a small circle of Anglomaniacs, but after August 4th it became popular all at once throughout Russia. The great hope of the second party was that the Tsar would not let slip this chance of endowing Russia with the blessings of a constitutional form of government, under which people might have liberty of speech, and Siberia might become a place for colonists rather than for political exiles.

The short-sighted party, on the contrary, preached reactionism, saying loudly that after the war that phantom of representative government, the Duma of the Empire, ought to be dispensed with, and Russia return to her former system of autocracy.

Between these two parties the government lost its head, and in watching them forgot to think about the far more serious question of controlling the operations of the General Staff.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, therefore, soon became omnipotent, as practically the whole responsibility, not only for the conduct of the campaign, but also for the government of Russia, was given into his hands. The military authorities alone ruled, and did not rule well.

The Tsar himself, with a deplorable weakness of character, had allowed his uncle to usurp the supreme command. Nicholas Nicholaievitch is not a bad man, although he is brutal. He is sincerely anxious to put

down every kind of abuse, and would be the first to prosecute anyone whom he found guilty of wrongdoing. But he is unintelligent, exceedingly vain, and perhaps overrates his powers. It is quite certain that, with a little forethought, the humiliating disasters of Galicia could have been avoided, but he felt so sure of the position which he occupied that he did not admit for a single moment the possibility of a reverse. In consequence he neglected to take the most elementary precautions. Determined to conquer at all cost, he hurled his army into the Carpathian passes with a recklessness that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. These would have been spared had he fortified himself in Galicia, and there awaited the onslaught of the enemy. But the General Staff had made up its mind to take Vienna, with the result that we had to resign ourselves to the loss of Lemberg.

These events, however, were far off at the time about which I am writing, in September, 1914, when we were all rejoicing at the conquest of Galicia. After we had occupied its capital, and taken the fortress of Jaroslau, there only remained Przemysl in possession of Austria, which, however, as we were well aware, was bound before long to surrender to our arms.

All these successes made us lose sight of what was going on in Eastern Prussia. We forgot that there, and not in the Galician plains, the ultimate fate of the campaign would be decided. During these days we heard very little, if anything at all, as to the doings of our armies, especially in Eastern Prussia, where we had kept some positions, notwithstanding the disaster inflicted upon us at Tannenberg; General Rennenkampf, who had won such laurels during the Japanese campaign, behaved very well at that period. The Prussians had intended to surround him unawares so as to oblige him to surrender. They had disembarked troops at Memel, and entered Russian territory from that point. Rennenkampf, however,

had got an excellent service of patrols, and, warned in time, succeeded in escaping the enemy, retreating in good order, and fighting the whole time, until he reached the Niemen, where he fortified himself with his back to that river, and to the two fortresses of Kovno and Grodno. Nevertheless, and though he had certainly saved the army entrusted to his care, intrigues obliged him to abandon his command a few weeks later, and retire into private life in Petrograd.

It was about this period that I had to leave Russia, and settle in Sweden for the time being, as my activity as a correspondent of an American paper had aroused the suspicions of the government, who told me I had better send my war telegrams from abroad. We came to Stockholm, but as people were continually coming and going between that town and the Russian capital, it was not difficult for me to keep in touch with my Russian friends, and to learn all that was going on in my native land. In spite of the close censorship, communications passed, as is always possible, and I was perhaps better informed as to what was taking place in Petrograd than many persons living there.

During that month of October, 1914, no very outstanding incident occurred either in Galicia or in Prussia. In the former place we had entirely installed ourselves, and even a Russian bank—the Russo-Asiatic—had thought it opportune to open an agency in Lemberg. A Governor-General, Count George Bobrinsky, had been placed at the head of the newly conquered province, and had assumed his difficult functions. He was a very nice man, and a thorough gentleman, and I suppose that he did not find his position exactly a pleasant one during the nine months or so that he held it. With him a number of priests of the Greek Church arrived, and set briskly to work converting the inhabitants to the orthodox faith—another of those mistakes which were to exasperate the population

against its new masters. Everybody in office considered that Galicia had become an integral part of the Russian Empire, and made drastic changes, which would have been better delayed until the future was more clearly defined. Meanwhile the Germans were progressing in Belgium, and, to the general consternation, Antwerp, which was deemed to be impregnable, fell before the guns which the Krupp factory had been building in great secrecy for the last six years or so, and which made possible practically all the successes obtained at this stage of the war by the troops of William II.

The fall of Antwerp made an immense impression in Russia, and strengthened considerably the party who believed that peace ought to be concluded before ever anyone could say that we were definitely vanquished. For the first time since the declaration of hostilities there was a certain agitation amongst the workmen in Petrograd, for which the revolutionary committees were responsible. Rumours—subsequently proved untrue—were put into circulation in the capital that we had been seriously defeated somewhere in Eastern Prussia, and that a large number of troops—some said three army corps—had found themselves compelled to capitulate to General von Hindenburg, who since the battle of Tannenberg had become a popular hero in Germany.

All these things contributed to the universal nervousness, and unfortunately the official news given so sparingly to the public left the feeling that something was being concealed—a fatal thing for the existence of any government. Contrary to the hopes entertained by the Germans, we remained firm in our positions, and did not relinquish the siege of Przemysl; indeed, we concentrated more troops there. In France, and in Belgium too, notwithstanding the terrible destruction and havoc made by the German armies, the Allies remained firm in their positions.

The war now began to assume an utterly uncivilised character, and all the different conventions signed at Geneva and at The Hague seemed to be ignored entirely by William II. and by his generals. The destruction of the famous library of Louvain, and the burning of Rheims Cathedral and the Cloth Hall of Ypres, only added to the general indignation against the modern Huns, who respected nothing, and massacred women and children with an indifference and a cruelty unsurpassed since the days of Attila and his savage hordes.

Meanwhile Turkey, long a centre of German intrigue, declared war on Russia. We found ourselves therefore confronted with another enemy, and one that, owing to the great number of Mohammedans living under our rule, might cause us considerable embarrassment. In Poland, the Germans, after having failed to reach Warsaw, retired in good order, but attacked us in Eastern Prussia, where we still retained the positions occupied immediately after the battle of Tannenberg. General von Hindenburg succeeded in drawing our main forces to the little town of Vloclavek, where his reserves, numbering something like 800,000 men, crushed our army almost entirely. As in the Galician retirement, which occurred when our troops were quite worn out by the very trying campaign they had gone through, this retreat became disorderly from the fact that the commissariat bases believed to be in that part of Poland did not exist. In consequence the troops had to go days without food. Otherwise our soldiers bore themselves in this battle, as in all others, with considerable courage and great valour. The misfortune was that our Staff did not appreciate the tactics of modern warfare, but still held on to old and superseded traditions. For instance, on his arrival from Petrograd a person, whom I happened to know very well, told me that his wounded son, an officer in the artillery, complained that ammunition was so scarce that it was no wonder we could not stand

the German attacks. It was so badly distributed that the shells suitable for the heavy guns were sent to batteries of light artillery, and vice versa. Already at that time—November, 1914—though few knew the truth, this lack of ammunition was seriously hampering the campaign.

The Grand Duke began to be blamed in military circles, just as General Kouropatkin had been blamed during the Manchurian campaign, and though the loyal sentiments of the soldiers to the Sovereign did not yet waver, still the army showed signs of dissatisfaction. The soldiers were heard to say that when peace was proclaimed they would fight the government, because it had not sufficiently equipped the army for the war into which Russia had been thrust. The Commander-in-Chief heard these rumours, but kept a discreet silence, though he wrote to Petrograd asking that a more rigorous watch than ever should be kept over the state of public feeling in the capital, and, further, asked the Emperor to pay a visit to the front.

This visit took place, the first Nicholas II. had made to the front, and, from a certain point of view, was successful, as most certainly the presence of the Tsar amongst his troops gave them great satisfaction, and added unquestionably to his popularity. But Nicholas II. himself was so terribly impressed by all the sad things which met his eye that he nearly broke down. He asked the Grand Duke whether he were really sure as to the ultimate issue of the war, whereupon the latter became insolent, and told the Sovereign that he guaranteed a complete victory for Russian arms. The Emperor subsided into silence, but was observed to look very sad after his return to Tsarskoye Selo. His kind nature, sensitive in the extreme, must have suffered terribly from the scenes he had been compelled to look upon, and he could not help some feeling of discouragement at the manner in which the war seemed to drag on, without any decisive result.

This state of mind of the Sovereign became known in

Petrograd, and—even so early as this in the war—suggestions were made that public opinion might be prepared to consider the possibility of the conclusion of an honourable peace.

Several deputies of the Duma of the Empire assembled to discuss the situation in a house belonging to one of their friends in the neighbourhood of the capital. They all belonged to the Liberal, though not to the Radical party, and certainly were not revolutionaries. The police arrested five just as they had reached their meeting-place; they were tried and convicted of crimes which they had not committed, and a few months later were sentenced to life-long banishment in Siberia. Though an appeal was made to the Imperial mercy on their behalf, the Sovereign, acting on the advice of the military authorities, refused to pardon them, and in the month of May the five men were sent into exile like common felons. At the same time new persecutions were instituted against the Jews. A young Jewish tailor, who had been called to join his regiment, was rather badly wounded in Poland, and was invalided home, minus one arm. No sooner had he reached Petrograd than he was expelled from the capital by the police, under the pretext that as he could no longer follow his trade he must return to his country of origin, the south of Russia. Such things, happening every day, were causing considerable friction at a time when wisdom called for their avoidance. These untoward events made Russian patriots despair of ever seeing their country truly free—or truly great!

CHAPTER VI.

The German Advance.

When war broke out, the famous Bourtzeff, the Socialistic journalist who had revealed to the world so many of the secrets of the Russian secret police, and without whom the machinations of the famous Azeff would never have been disclosed, found that his patriotic feelings would not allow him to remain quietly abroad whilst his Fatherland was in danger. In spite of a previous declaration never to return to Russia, he therefore applied to the government for permission to do so, and to enter the army as a volunteer. Permission was granted, and he was even given a special pass to cross the frontier. Yet on reaching Raumo, on the Finnish coast, he was instantly arrested, taken under a strong escort to Petrograd, and confined in the fortress. Immediately this breach of faith became known a great wave of indignation swept over the country, and the Ministry was most violently attacked for having captured him by subterfuge. Secret meetings of the leaders of the Radical and Socialist parties took place everywhere, and though some of them came to the knowledge of the police, yet the majority remained undiscovered. Leaflets too were printed and abundantly distributed throughout Russia, calling upon the country to unite in a common effort to overthrow a régime capable of such treachery. Strong efforts were made by influential persons to get Bourtzeff released, but proved useless, and in the following January he was tried in Petrograd on the charge of high treason, which was supposed to be

contained in newspaper articles he had written whilst abroad. This trial was a farce, and Bourtzeff was sentenced to lifelong deportation, being taken to Siberia in irons, sharing thus the fate of the five Socialist members of the Duma to whom I have already referred. The incident was more harmful than the loss of a dozen battles.

Our affairs, though successful in Galicia, were not going so well in Eastern Prussia or in Poland. General von Hindenburg, who seemed determined not to leave us any respite, inflicted a severe defeat near Thorn, for which he was promoted to the rank of Field-Marshal. We committed the initial mistake of scattering our troops and never meeting the enemy in sufficient force. Whilst the Prussians never approached us save in considerable numbers, we allowed as few as two or three corps to accept their challenge, and consequently were seriously defeated. For instance, in Poland, during the November battles, the 1st, 3rd and 5th army corps were hurled against over four hundred thousand men, commanded by von Hindenburg in person, and, naturally, were badly beaten. Later on formidable forces were dispatched to Galicia, but it was too late, as the morale of our soldiers was broken by these repeated defeats, and they had lost that certainty of past victories which gives confidence for the future.

A general, retired, of great talent, during a visit that he paid to Headquarters by special invitation of the Commander-in-Chief, ventured to bring to the notice of the Grand Duke Nicholas the fact which I have just mentioned—that the German troops were strongly massing in Poland. The Grand Duke remained for some time silent, then said with a shade of regret in his voice: "You may be right, but then we never knew the Germans had entered the kingdom of Poland in such numbers." This avowal is in itself a condemnation of the Russian military intelligence system. Few of the movements of the Prussian armies were known to us, whilst every step we took was

immediately reported to General von Hindenburg by spies who were everywhere, even in the offices of our Staff and at Headquarters. The untrustworthiness of the information regarding the doings of the enemy was never more apparent than during this winter campaign in Poland, where we were reported to be victorious. The Germans, after having pretended they wanted to take Warsaw, had retired toward their own frontier and left the Polish capital alone. In reality the intention to seize that town had never existed, and the whole thing had been a blind to divert our attention from their real plan, to take Lodz, the greatest industrial centre of the whole region, and to secure the coal mines which were scattered all along the frontier. The possession of these points would have afforded the invaders an excellent and most valuable base for their winter operations. Warsaw was not to be touched until the following summer, when the German Staff were satisfied its capture would be comparatively easy.

The possession of Lodz was of definite advantage to the enemy, the more so that munitions and provisions of every kind had been accumulated within its walls, and when its fall became known in Petrograd people began to shake their heads and say that they really could not see where the victories which the Russian military authorities announced every day with such pomp came in, because all the while we lost ground and our enemies got farther into the interior of the country. Yet our Staff persisted in saying that all was going well, and that whenever we retreated it was purely from strategical reasons; we still were going straight to Berlin, and had never been driven out of Eastern Prussia. If Poland were invaded, well it was very unfortunate, but what did it signify in view of our glorious successes elsewhere?

In Poland people did not seem to share this opinion, and thought that it mattered a great deal. A Warsaw

banker with whom I was in correspondence wrote to me on this subject in the following terms:

"We are living here as if on a volcano, and are going through very hard times. Trade and industry are at a standstill, and if this state of things lasts much longer everybody will be ruined by this ferocious and merciless war. For the present all our factories are shut, with the exception of those that the Germans are running for their own benefit, thousands of workmen are unemployed, banks are without money, and even the peasants find themselves compelled to fly from their homes without knowing where to go. The whole social order is crumbling to pieces, and the only comfort that we can find in this deplorable state of things is the thought that this awful war cannot surely last much longer, and after then the world will be at peace for all time."

This letter, written by a clever and shrewd man, who, being on the spot, was able to form for himself a sound opinion concerning the situation created by the war, shows the state of mind which existed at that time in Poland. On the other hand, Southern Russians, who did not feel so keenly the miseries caused by the war, were still deluded. Another friend of mine, who happened to spend some time in Kharkov, a great commercial and industrial centre, sent me also about that time a missive in sharp contrast to the one I have just quoted.

"You cannot picture to yourself how entirely our population sympathises with our splendid troops, how it sacrifices everything to further the war, and how it hates the Germans. Under such conditions we can continue this war for years and years, and the utter destruction of the Prussians is absolutely certain, only a matter of time."

These two letters show the state of feeling existing in both Petrograd and Moscow, not only as to the war itself, but more particularly still on what would follow after the

war, and of the influence which the war was bound to have on the future development as well as on the political life of the country once it was over. As the months went on, bringing one no nearer to a solution, people began to get more and more anxious, and to be dubious concerning the policy of the government. Distrust of the people in whose hands reposed the conduct of the campaign increased every day; this, indeed, is what a deputy belonging to the moderate party of the Duma wrote to me on this subject:

"The recent events in Poland have not surprised us, and the only regret is that the Staff still preserves its methods of secrecy, and does not make a clean breast of our losses. I think the government mistaken in deciding that grave news would have unfavourably impressed the masses. The Russian is patriotic, and love for his native soil is far more developed in the moujik than he is given credit for. Just remember what happened in 1812 when Napoleon entered Moscow, and lodged himself in the Kremlin. The very fact of this humiliation roused the feelings of the whole nation, and ultimately drove the conqueror out. At present, when it is quite impossible to prevent people from communicating with each other, the better course for the government would have been to tell the truth. This would at least have stopped the lies that are daily put into circulation, and rid the nation of the dominant idea that things are so bad the authorities fear to reveal them. This is what the man in the street thinks, and the workman who, owing to his position, is perhaps the best judge of what the government has done in the matter of our national defence, does not scruple to say that, if we are beaten, the fault lies at the door of our authorities. These workmen, who have adherents and allies scattered in every industrial centre in Russia, are preparing themselves to demand, not only from the Grand Duke Nicholas and his advisers, but also from the Emperor himself, a full account as to what has been done to defend

us against our enemies. The military authorities, in whose hands the government of the country virtually lies at present, imagine that by giving free scope to the activity of political detectives, they will be able to repress every revolutionary movement in Russia. What an error! On the contrary, the measures employed considerably hasten that movement. When people come to realise that neither their homes nor their private lives are free from the interference of the police, that their correspondence is read, their actions shadowed; and that they are in danger any minute of being unlawfully transported to Siberia; that even the most devoted and faithful servants of the Crown have become exasperated, then surely we must consider whether the hour has not struck when it would be to the general advantage to change the existing state of things. When quiet, peaceful, earnest people, who all their days have been strong Conservatives and admirers of autocracy, come to that conclusion, then, believe me, a revolution is not far off. The present state of feeling in Petrograd is that the war itself is eclipsed by terror as to its possible consequences and influence on the future of the national existence, apart from the extreme autocrat party, all of whom hold some official appointment or other; respect for the person of the Emperor is fast disappearing, while respect for the authorities in power never existed. Religion does not enter into the calculations of the masses, and perhaps the only thing which inspires with admiration that class of persons to whom I have just been referring is the steady progress made by the German armies, and their spirit of organisation. This sentiment is so real that a friend, referring to certain revolutionary movements in Moscow, about which there had been uneasiness in official circles, said: 'You will see the day come when our Tsar is compelled to ask the German Emperor to help him to keep the crown which revolution is wresting from him.' Unfortunately this is a bitter truth. The government is trying

to incite public opinion against the German residents in Russia. This is a terribly mischievous step, because a multitude which has once tasted of plunder soon loses all discrimination, and will end by sacking the homes of the Russians—a very definite fear for the near future. When that day arrives no one in Russia will have the least interest in her fate; and perhaps few of the nations of Europe will betray much concern."

When the news arrived that we had again been defeated in Eastern Prussia, and the Grand Duke declared in his official communication to the public and to the Press that only "for strategical reasons" had we been obliged to evacuate the province, one began to wonder when these strategical reasons would cease to be used as a pretext for constant defeats. This time the battle which had been fought near the frontier appeared to have been of unusual magnitude, the enemy attacked us with great fury, and our sixth army, under General Count Sievers—which held the roads leading into Poland—was routed.

During this battle, and the retreat which followed upon it, our troops did such wonders that no matter what happened later their defeat was more glorious than any victory would have been, and even the Germans found themselves compelled to express the admiration which the resistance of their foes inspired. For instance, the little town of Johannisburg was held by the 57th Russian Division, which for three days defended it under artillery fire which an eye-witness affirmed surpassed anything ever seen in warfare. The German reports declared that the troops fled in disorder, but to show how utterly false was this assertion it will be enough to relate that, when at last the small town had to be abandoned, the greatest order prevailed, every man even taking his personal baggage. A group of soldiers volunteered to carry away untouched the colours of the different regiments engaged in the battle. When they found themselves closely pursued by the enemy

a soldier proposed tearing the flags from their standards, and hiding them in the men's clothing, to which an old non-commissioned officer, turning to the soldier, retorted: "Surely these children are strong enough to bring back our flags to those who entrusted them with their care!" These words were greeted by loud hurrahs, and the flags were saved. The 56th Division repulsed with the bayonet all the attempts of the enemy to capture the two important positions of Spullen and Henskischken, and it was only when the heavy German guns, which had been brought over from Thorn, began their murderous fire, that they were abandoned, leaving half the division killed. They carried away, however, with but few exceptions, all their wounded. It is to be noticed that during this murderous battle, which lasted nine days, we lost scarcely any baggage, and would have been able to take away all our guns had it not been for the sudden change in the weather. It had been very cold till a south wind caused enormous masses of snow to melt, transforming the roads and passes into vast lakes, where men and horses had to wade, sometimes up to the neck, followed by the devastating fire of enemy artillery. In the churchyard of Kybarty, a small village not far from Insterburg, the Germans found one of our batteries which had been abandoned because every horse and man in charge of it had been killed. And when at last the Russian army succeeded in getting across the frontier, it was neither demoralised nor discouraged, but, on the contrary, eager to avenge itself for its momentary defeat. It is quite certain that if at that moment the Commander-in-Chief had sent some reinforcements to Count Sievers the latter would have been able to resume the offensive, so determined were his soldiers to give a lesson to "these German dogs," as they called them. But it was decided in Headquarters that it would be useless wasting precious lives to try to stop the German torrent, and that the best plan was to rally the troops under the

walls of Warsaw, so as to defend that city in case of need. The bulk of the army had already been sent on to the Galician front to attempt to force the chain of the Carpathians, and march on Vienna by that road.

This battle, which the Germans fondly hoped would decide the fate of the campaign and induce Russia to seek for peace, turned out to be only a small incident amidst all the other deeds of bravery which will mark this war. The Prussian troops who took part in it were quite astounded at the endurance displayed by their opponents, even after renewed attacks had been met. When the battle was over the Emperor William, who had watched it from afar, was driven in his automobile to Lyck, on the Russian frontier. Lyck had been the scene of more than one struggle; few houses remained standing, so awful had been the artillery fire. As the Sovereign entered it he was, of course, greeted by immense acclamations. The National Anthem was followed by the hymn which is so dear to German hearts, and which in its arrogance is so characteristic of the folk—*Deutschland! Deutschland über Alles.* A Russian officer who had been taken prisoner, and who was compelled to witness this scene, could not help murmuring: "No, not above everything!" A German captain who understood Russian overheard him, and replied, "Yes, you are right: not above the courage displayed by your army in this battle."

The success obtained by Marshal von Hindenburg was certainly great, but it is to be questioned whether it deserved to be called decisive. The German press made much of it, and declared that, on that account, Eastern Prussia was freed from the invaders. But if we look at things impartially we shall find, first of all, that the Russians never had the whole of that province in their possession, and that the points which they occupied were very close to the frontier, so that the retreat over which such a fuss was made covered barely a few miles. We had to protect

Warsaw, and sooner or later we should have had to evacuate the positions in which we were entrenched. It is a thousand pities that the Staff did not realise this at once, and concentrate the army commanded by Count Sievers around Warsaw, or else send him reinforcements strong enough to enable him to resist the attack which was hurled at him. The initial mistake of the whole campaign, speedily recognised with great joy in Berlin, was in not having adhered to the original plan of at once sending the whole of the Russian forces into Eastern Prussia, with orders to break through at all costs towards Berlin. Instead of this, the report issued by the German Staff, that most of the army of our adversaries had been dispatched to France, was fully believed, and consequently only a few divisions from Russia would be sufficient to clear the way to the Prussian capital. Thus deceived, they determined on a simultaneous march on Königsberg, and an attempt to force the Carpathian passes, so as to arrive in Vienna as soon as in Berlin.

A wonderful plan indeed; but no sane person with the slightest knowledge of German resources would ever have attempted to execute it. To cross the Carpathians in mid-winter was in itself an act of folly; but to imagine that it would be possible to do so without sufficient artillery was criminal. It cost us hundreds of thousands of men; it demoralised and weakened the spirit of the army; it wore out our resources; and, what is even worse, it convinced our enemy of our ignorance of the elementary principles of warfare. The strategy of the Grand Duke Nicholas was absolutely marvellous, but quite Utopian, consequently the blood of our children was uselessly spilt.

Another expensive mistake for which the General Staff was responsible was the inefficiency of its Intelligence Department. Certain facts stand out lamentably in comparison with the exactitude with which the Germans were kept informed. For instance, it was firmly believed by

our Staff that the troops of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg consisted either of Landwehr men or else of quite young recruits. In reality some of the best Prussian battalions—the famous Pomeranian Grenadiers and Roon's Fusiliers—had been brought quietly into Eastern Prussia.

The secret of the whole thing lies in the fact that, when the war began, the Grand Duke, his Staff, the public—and, in short, everybody—had made up their minds that we were to emerge victorious out of the struggle, and that the war was to be a matter of a few weeks. When we had to resign ourselves to a long campaign we failed by not holding on to one plan, well prepared in its every detail, and followed with patience and perseverance. I have been told by a Russian officer of high rank that, had this been the case, we would have caused considerable annoyance and no little trouble to our enemies.

Above everything there was the deplorable lack of ammunition which handicapped us. The terrible conflict which we have just gone through has been essentially an artillery fight—a scientific affair, where personal courage has but a small part, especially on the side of our enemies, who resorted to all kinds of abominable treacheries. We kept military attachés in Berlin, and certainly we spent as much money on our Intelligence Department as the Prussians did, and yet we were never informed properly as to what was going on in their camp. Need I repeat that the reason of it lies in the deplorable habit which prevails in Russia of giving one's whole attention to the political opinions of one's own people, instead of being alive to what is going on abroad? During this war almost all the population of Poland is being kept in a state of perpetual surveillance by an army of spies, yet the Staff was never informed of the fact that Marshal von Hindenburg was slowly drawing around us a ring of steel.

Nevertheless I must repeat, this Mazurian battle, as the Germans called it, did not exercise any real influence

on the campaign, and in Petrograd itself it produced but a very slight impression, counterbalanced as it was by successes which at the same time we obtained in the Caucasus against the Turks. What caused more uneasiness was the evacuation of Czernowitz in the Bukowina, where we were supposed to have taken a firm stand. More intently still was public attention concentrated on what was going on in the Carpathians, and even the atrocities committed by the German armies in Belgium and the heroic resistance of the French to furious German attacks passed almost unnoticed. Great hopes, by the way, had been set upon France as upon the common plan which was supposed to have been formed between the Grand Duke Nicholas and General Joffre, and according to which their two armies were to meet in Berlin. The failure of this plan, for it was openly acknowledged to have failed, caused some ill-natured people to say that the French Alliance had plunged us into the war.

As the war went on, England became more popular; the noble manner in which the British in public, and especially the upper classes, had responded to the appeal of the Allies filled Russia with admiration. One felt especially surprised to find that every political strife was laid aside, and that all political parties helped each other in this hour when Britain's high sense of honour had not allowed her to remain unmoved in presence of the German treachery in regard to Belgium. Russian politicians frankly owned that such a thing would have been impossible in their own land. One or two organs of the Russian Press drew the attention of their readers to an article in *The Times* in which it was said that very probably the Russians would find themselves with their hands full for some time, and that consequently it was the duty of their Allies to lighten their task by doing all that was in their power to deal a decisive blow at the common enemy on the Eastern front, so as to draw attention away from the West. This noble

appeal touched excessively the hearts of the Russian people, and added to the sympathy and respect which it already felt for the British nation.

In the meanwhile, and at the very moment when Marshal von Hindenburg believed that he had entirely prevented us from attempting another offensive movement in Poland, a relatively small detachment of Russian troops unexpectedly crossed the Vistula, and succeeded in obliging the enemy to retire beyond the line directly threatening Warsaw.

Concerning this offensive movement, I received a letter from an officer who took part in it. It will give better than I can an idea of the bravery with which our soldiers fought, and their spirit of obedience and self-sacrifice.

"We were quartered in the little village of U——. We had heard that an offensive movement was planned against the Prussian lines, but no one knew anything positive concerning it, till one morning at four o'clock we were wakened by our orderlies, who asked us to get up quickly, and drink some tea as orders had just arrived that we were to come out at seven o'clock. Of course we dressed in a hurry, and a few minutes later another orderly came and told us that all the officers were to assemble at the head of their men outside the camp, where we had been detained for a few days awaiting the decision of the Staff.

"We began to march at once, and instead of going toward the village of B—— we were sent in quite an opposite direction. We had to march along a very dirty road, and through several small hamlets, whence all the inhabitants had fled, until we reached the high road that took us to a spot where we found the Staff assembled. It was only there that our colonel received his orders, which were to go as far as the village of W——, situated on the very

borders of the Vistula, and to cross the river immediately without waiting for further reinforcements.

"We started at once, and covered about ten versts without any incident, but when we were almost one verst and a half's distance from the Vistula the enemy noticed our approach and began shelling us. When we reached the village of P—— our commander ordered us to leave our baggage and field kitchen which had followed us all the time, and allowed us to take a few moments' rest, so as to get a meal of some kind. I had hardly got a piece of bread and some bacon out of my knapsack when a shell, which luckily did not explode, dropped quite close to the barn where we had found cover. Directly after our hasty meal the captain ordered us out, and we resumed our march, choosing by-roads this time, as the tremendous fire which had been opened against us by the enemy made the highway impossible. After some time the Germans noticed what we were doing, and directed their guns toward us. We were then going in a parallel line with the river, and were immediately ordered to lie down, which we did, until an orderly sent by the colonel of an infantry regiment came to tell us that we had better go round another way, where we could be protected by our own artillery.

"We started once more, this time very carefully, so as not to be observed. The enemy kept shelling us continually, but our guns replied, and in their turn bombarded the German trenches most violently. A murderous fire followed us all the way, the shells used to fly all around us in a manner which at first was most unpleasant, but to which we got used afterwards. I remember seeing one of these bombs coming straight towards us, and had hardly cautioned a non-commissioned officer who was walking before me, when the awful object fell about ten paces from us; luckily it did not explode. At last we reached the river, and immediately began to unload our pontoons,

and to assemble them. The enemy went on shelling us, but nevertheless we contrived to fulfil our task, and set ourselves to cross the Vistula under the fire of the Germans. Thanks to the clever manner in which the pontoons were managed by a few non-commissioned officers, we succeeded in landing a part of the infantry, after which we started back to fetch more troops.

"This time we were not so lucky, and when we had reached the middle of the river the enemy hit one of our pontoons, which nearly overturned. It was then that one of the most heroic deeds of the day took place; a soldier wounded in both legs, as well as in the chest, contrived to seize the oars with his right hand, and to bring our skiff safely to its destination. When it got there it was found that not one of the men on board was without wounds.

"It was decided to wait until the evening before attempting to send more troops across the river. At about six o'clock the enemy's fire grew less, and at last left off altogether, and we heard later that our artillery had succeeded in silencing the batteries of our adversaries, whom we could see from our side of the Vistula moving into safer quarters. When night had quite fallen we got a few more regiments across, and this went on until seven in the morning, when the Germans once more opened fire on us, but this time from a farther distance, so that we were enabled to build a large ferry which considerably helped us in our task.

"It is impossible to praise sufficiently the cool courage displayed by our soldiers, who amidst a truly hellish fire never lost their presence of mind, but went on with their work as if nothing extraordinary were going on around them. Not a single man wavered; not one showed the least nervousness or anxiety, and yet we had amongst us young boys who had never been in a battle before. With such people one can attempt anything, and, boast as the

Germans will, the day when they will get the better of us is still far off. A few days later we heard that our commander had asked for six Crosses of St. George to be distributed to the men who had been in charge of the pontoons that had brought the first detachments of troops across the Vistula."

What my correspondent omitted to write was that he had been one of those to whom this much coveted distinction had been awarded.

CHAPTER VII.

LETTERS FROM THE GALICIAN FRONT.

THE letter quoted in the previous chapter is one among hundreds in my possession that testify to the determination and courage of our Russian soldiers. In this war heroism was quite a usual thing; and if one had wanted to honour all the men who distinguished themselves by deeds of valour, sufficient crosses of St. George could not be found to go round—as other letters show:

"On the 27th of April the division of General Seliwanov was ordered to take the offensive against the Austrians. The aim of this movement was to occupy a line of hills extending south of the village of Korniewka, and the high road between Nedzwisk and Gorodnya. In that same direction, but more to the right, General S——'s column was advancing, and from the left that of General P——.

"The division marched off; on the right flank the infantry regiment No. 3, the infantry regiment No. 4 in the centre, and on the left flank the infantry regiment No. 2. Regiment No. 1 was left behind as a reserve, and both flanks were covered by half squadrons from a Cuirassier Regiment.

"When the third infantry regiment passed before Hill 341 the Austrians opened fire at first from their guns, and then from their rifles. What no one afterwards could understand was why they remained silent for so long, because our men had already arrived within 1,200 paces of their trenches, and our infantry could only advance very slowly, owing to the wet condition of the ground and

the heavy rain. One column had even to stop, as its right flank was uncovered, and we had to wait until more troops had joined us and the second battalion arrived to lengthen the advancing line. The Austrians suddenly ceased firing, and rushed out of their trenches to meet us in a hand-to-hand fight. This did not bring success to their side, so they had very quickly to get under cover again, but we also had heavy losses. While the enemy was retiring, a battery of machine guns under the command of Captain —— opened fire upon its trenches, and under its cover our men got up once more, and covered some five hundred paces of ground, going straight for the Austrians. The machine-gun battery also came forward, and tried the whole time to keep pace with us, following especially the movements of the third battalion until the enemy was obliged to retire before our advancing forces. Our men, feeling themselves supported by the machine guns, which never stopped mowing down the Austrians, went along quite cheerfully, and prepared themselves to attack the trenches in which the latter were awaiting them, when suddenly the position changed. A fresh battalion of German infantry took up its position on our right side so as to surround us entirely, and subjected us to constant shelling. Our soldiers began to get nervous, fearing that we were being trapped. The officers, however, kept their presence of mind and shouted to their men not to give in nor to turn back. Captain M——, who was in command of the eighth company, jumped into a ditch where his men had hidden themselves, and seizing the rifle of a fallen soldier lifted it above his head, and exclaiming, 'Comrades, now is the time to follow me,' boldly threw himself forward. About a hundred men followed him, storming the barbed wire covering the Austrian trenches. Captain K—— also led his company, but fell wounded almost immediately. Very soon the whole regiment became involved in the attack, and tried to take possession of the

trenches, which were defended with unusual courage by German troops, whilst the Austrians either fled or gave themselves up without offering any resistance. Captain S——, in charge of the seventh company, took three officers and 108 soldiers prisoners, whilst the third company seized half a battalion of Austrian infantry. The Germans were at last obliged to abandon their positions, and at about seven o'clock in the evening our regiments stormed the village of O——, and at once began fortifying this position.

"This was principally due to the exertions of the third infantry regiment. The fourth, which had to bear almost the whole brunt of the attack, had began to advance toward the enemy's trenches at about six o'clock in the morning. The ninth and the twelfth companies were leading the way. When they got quite close to the Austrians their commanders took the lead, and shouted to their men to attack with the bayonet. The enemy were routed, but in the fury of the attack the first and third battalions were separated from each other, and compelled to face the enemy alone. The eighth and seventh companies came to the rescue, but a most severe artillery fire laid low about half the detachment. Towards evening the regiment had joined their comrades and taken up its position in the east side of the village of O——.

"The second infantry regiment had begun its advance against the enemy in the night. This was a regiment whose motto was 'Forward, and forward,' and during this memorable attack it remained faithful to it. When the scouts sent out returned with the report that the Austrians were retiring from the villages of R—— and K——, the colonel went forward himself with one battalion and occupied them. In the early morning he called together the whole regiment, and led it toward the village of D——, which he had been ordered to storm. Being told that a considerable force of cavalry was approaching to bar the way, he turned toward his men with the remark,

'Surely, children, you are going to show them that it is no use playing this kind of game with us!' The soldiers responded to his appeal by an energetic rifle fire, and at last the Austrians had to retire, but the communications with the column of General P—— had been cut by the enemy and could not be re-established. The regiment found itself thrown upon its own resources and harried by an adversary that was fast being reinforced. Its position became the more critical as nothing was heard of the first and second battalion—the reason became known later on: all the orderlies sent with reports to the colonel had been killed whilst on their way. In this emergency a mountain battery appeared on the scene, and began shelling the Austrian troops, so as to prevent their advance. This interference saved the second infantry regiment, but nearly all the officers in charge of this battery were either killed or wounded. In the meantime scouts had brought news that the enemy had fortified himself in a strong position near the village of S——, whence it would be most difficult to dislodge him. This circumstance obliged our troops to change their front, and give up their attempt to join the rest of the division at O—— by storming the Austrian trenches. They had to take another road, entailing a long and difficult march, which the men, though nearly exhausted, accomplished in a very short time.

"What made this offensive on our part so wonderful was the courage and intrepidity which our officers displayed. In some companies all the officers were killed, and the sergeant-majors had to take their places, and in the first infantry regiment, which had been kept in reserve and which later on had to advance under a murderous fire, three battalions ended in being led by a sub-lieutenant, who alone escaped."

By this letter alone it can be seen that the soldiers and the officers at the front were all real heroes, and bore

themselves like heroes. If only the Staff and High Command had been as zealous in military matters, instead of dissipating their energies upon political repression, things might have been different.

As an example I am going to quote a secret circular dated January 12th (25th), 1915, which was sent to the Head of the Staff of the sixth army, and which ran :—

"I have the honour to bring to your knowledge a letter from the general on duty attached to the person of his Imperial Highness the Commander-in-Chief, the contents of which I want you to notice particularly, and which is registered under No. 263. According to information received from our political agents, the Jews in the kingdom of Poland, together with agitators belonging to different political parties, are disseminating among the troops proclamations to the effect that when the war is over they ought to use pressure to induce the government to change its course, and to allow liberal ideas to be heard. These proclamations are sent in parcels containing clothing or other presents for the soldiers, and packed most carefully, so as not to be noticed at first sight, in the lining of the clothes or some such places. The Commander-in-Chief directs me to ask you to use all the means in your power to put an end to such dangerous activities.—(*Signed*) Colonel POSOCHOV, for the Quartermaster-General."

According to information which I have every reason to believe true, the proclamations alluded to had never been distributed among the troops, and had only been put into circulation in Petrograd and Moscow among the garrison left in those towns. But the orders of the Grand Duke precipitated an advent of detectives among the army at the Front, which only caused exasperation, and gave rise to serious discontent on the part of the men at a time when they were risking their lives every day for their Fatherland.

A clever Russian writer once said that the "most singular thing about Russian autocracy is that it feels continually frightened at something or of somebody." The assertion contains a good deal of truth. The mistake of our government has always been in not trusting the loyalty of the nation, and not giving liberty in the manifestation of its patriotism, by making restrictions whereby the lives of many people became a burden; hence the persecutions against the Jews, the Poles and the Finns, and the Germans of the Baltic provinces; hence this perpetual anxiety as to any wish for constitutional government that has haunted the sleep of all the Ministers and advisers of the Tsars. The famous autocracy which has long ruled Russia has in reality been the tyranny of officials and detectives who have substituted their authority for that of the reigning monarch, and by their misdeeds in his name have made him unpopular among his own subjects.

Alexander III. understood very well this dark spot in the administration of the country over which he ruled, and as long as he lived he kept the supreme authority in his own hands. He was a strong character and a good man at the same time; highly principled, and not to be influenced by old women's tales, or even by the representations of his Ministers when he thought these did not agree with what he considered to be the welfare of Russia. Unfortunately, his reign was a short one, and his successor, far from adhering to the resolution to which his father kept firmly all his life, of not allowing any member of the Imperial family to come to the front—in any circumstances whatever—practically delivered all the responsibility of affairs of State to his uncle the Grand Duke Nicholas, who, whilst professing to be the guardian of the principles of autocracy, thought about them mainly only so far as they affected his personal position and influence.

This at least was what was generally believed in Petrograd, and it is impossible to pass in silence the feelings

of antipathy which the personality of the Commander-in-Chief excited everywhere.

First of all, the Grand Duke was not popular in the army. It is said that the soldiers liked him, but they had been trained to like every member of the Imperial family simply on account of his position as such. The officers frankly detested the uncle of the Tsar, and made no secret of it. Terrible stories went about as to the manner in which he ill-treated his subordinates, making them responsible for his own mistakes. From the very outset of the campaign friction had arisen between him and leaders of the army. When General Roussky, who alone could boast of definite successes in the course of the campaign, because it was he who had taken Lemberg and conquered Galicia, tried to remonstrate with the Commander-in-Chief as to the folly of attempting to force the passes of the Carpathians in mid-winter, he was rudely told to mind his own business, and afterwards advised to ask to be relieved from his command on the ground of ill-health. When, later, after the disastrous end of the Galician campaign, and the recapture of Lemberg and Przemysl by the Austro-German troops, the War Minister, General Soukhomlinov, went to the Tsar and told him frankly the truth concerning the military situation, the Grand Duke sent an ultimatum to his Imperial nephew, and declared that either he or the general would have to go. The Sovereign, believing in the popularity of Nicholas Nicholaievitch, did not dare risk the departure of the latter, and the War Minister was sacrificed to the great detriment of the army for which he had cared, and over whose welfare he had watched with unceasing energy and attention for about five years.

But I am anticipating, and in February, 1915, everyone thought that General Soukhomlinov would remain at the head of the War Office until the end of the campaign; the possibility of ministerial changes was not considered. One began at this period to think less about our share in

the war as a whole, and more about what was taking place at the Western front, where the British and French armies were fighting so bravely. The public became absorbed by events in Belgium, and the repeated outrages upon humanity and mankind committed by the German troops. The destruction of so many relics of the past, including works of art, landmarks in the history of Europe, had aroused not only the deepest indignation, but also a furious hatred against the perpetrators of these infamies, and Russia began to feel that in fighting Germany she was also fighting for the cause of civilisation, of justice and of truth. These sentiments ought to have been exploited by her leaders, but blunders were also committed in that direction; and the only thing which the Government did was harshly to forbid people talking German in the street under penalty of several months' imprisonment. As a contrast, the Emperor William caused it to be known that he wished his subjects to study Russian, so as to be able to talk with the people of the country whom he openly avowed his intention to conquer. I leave it to the reader to judge which of the two parties showed the greater intelligence.'

In March, 1915, the German papers were full of the story of the invasion of Memel by Russian troops, who, it was said, had committed terrible atrocities in that town, which they had entirely looted, after having murdered many of its inhabitants. Awful tales were told, but what really occurred savoured simply of the convivial, and the "awful" details proved to be a fabrication on the part of the Prussians for the disparagement of their adversaries.

In Petrograd lived a certain Colonel R——, who at one time had been a very well-known society man, through the popularity and excellent connections of his wife. Lately, however, the couple had parted, because Madame R—— had found herself unable to submit any longer to the drunken habits and behaviour of her husband. When the

war broke out, the latter went to his estates situated in the government of Witebsk, where he raised a corps of volunteers willing to go and fight the Germans. One evening, being rather the worse for drink, he declared that, no matter what was going to happen, he meant to take a Prussian town. It was just after the great battle in the Mazurian region, and public opinion was very much excited. Colonel R—— provided horses for about half a squadron of his friends, and they started for Memel. They entered the town without firing a single shot, and set themselves most conscientiously to plundering all the shops and all the houses where they could effect an entrance, after which they retired in a worse state than they had arrived, and with the satisfaction of having absorbed an immense quantity of spirits of every kind. When the news of this escapade reached the ears of the Commander-in-Chief he was furious, and it was only with considerable difficulty that he was restrained from court-martialling the hero of this disgraceful adventure. The Germans instantly laid the responsibility for this at the door of the Russian Government, and had long articles published in all their papers in which the cruelty and lack of conscience of the Russians in thus invading a peaceful little town without any garrison to defend it were explained in full, along with an adjuration to the German people to stand like one man in order to fight such lawless brutes. What they had done themselves in Belgium and elsewhere was most conveniently forgotten.

All this has led me far from the campaigns in Galicia and in the region of the Carpathian mountains. We had sent enormous forces there, where they were set the colossal task of forcing a way through the snowy passes. For about two months the most terrible battles were fought in that region, and the loss of life on both sides surpassed everything known in the annals of warfare. Our troops had to fight under the most unfavourable conditions, and

displayed a courage which even won the admiration of the Austrians. At first it was thought that we could easily fight through, with the help of the strong force of artillery provided for that purpose, but it soon became evident that it was impossible to move the guns quickly enough, owing to the deep snow. The horses had to be unharnessed, the guns dragged along by men who dropped under the heavy burden and were often left to perish. The Austro-German forces had fortified themselves at every step and corner, and on all sides the Russians were met by a murderous fire, and compelled finally to abandon any attempt to make headway. A heavy snowstorm enabled a small Russian force to elude the vigilance of the enemy, and to clear the Dukla pass, one of the most dangerous of the Carpathians; but the rest of the army could not follow, and finally they were obliged to surrender, after having broken their rifles and burned their flag to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. Some of our regiments covered themselves with immortal glory all through those dreadful days when they could get no rest, and for long hours were exposed to the shell fire of their opponents.

The battle lasted two months, and was just as fierce on the last day as on the first, never varying in its intensity or stubbornness. The Russians did wonders, the Germans also gave proofs of remarkable courage, and the Austrians, who in the plains of Galicia had fled in whole regiments from the field of battle, suddenly retrieved themselves and fought with considerable intrepidity. Commanding all the roads leading through the mountains, the troops of the Central Empires could with advantage rain shells on the advancing Russian masses. On the other hand, our own soldiers, driven to despair by this incessant fire day and night, strengthened themselves for a supreme effort, and attempted to force the Uszoka pass. It was then that some soldiers desired to speak to General Lissowzky,

who was in command of the advancing column, and who later on was himself to be severely wounded. When he asked what they wanted, they declared that they had come to crave permission to try to get the guns through by harnessing themselves to them. When the General replied that this was impossible, "Oh, little father," they exclaimed, "it is not harder than getting through ourselves." The heroic offer could not be accepted, as it would have exposed to certain death those who volunteered for this piece of self-sacrifice, and the General was in want of men even more than of guns. One of the fiercest engagements of this long battle took place in Harcos, and there it happened that we left the greatest number of dead and wounded. The enemy, however, also suffered severely, and the prisoners we took were all entirely exhausted by the terrible hardships they had gone through. These prisoners agreed in saying that the extraordinary energy which we had displayed had considerably surprised the German Staff, who had not believed it possible that we could attack with such force the positions which they had fortified so carefully, and the impregnability of which was accentuated by the rigours of an arctic winter.

The hero of these Carpathian battles was General Seliwanov, who had made himself most popular with his troops, and had inspired them with great confidence. It was certainly due to his efforts that we managed at last to retire in good order from the perilous position in which we had found ourselves.

One remark I would fain make in regard to this retreat. The Germans have laughed at us for pretending that we were victorious, whilst constantly obliged to abandon positions which we had either taken or occupied at first. But they forgot that every time we had to retrace our steps we did so in perfect order, and immediately assumed a new offensive. The great aim and ambition of the enemy to divide our armies and cut their communication so as

to oblige them to surrender was never attained, and even when we found ourselves compelled to evacuate Przemysl, and later on Lemberg—the possession of which had been the cause of so much rejoicing in Russia—there was no panic, but, on the contrary, great coolness and sagacity. We were defeated, but never routed, and even the German Staff had to reconcile itself to that fact.

When the Grand Duke at last owned that the desperate attempt he had made to effect a passage for his troops through the Carpathian passes had failed, a considerable amount of irritation was felt in Petrograd, where the general opinion was that it would have been better not to engage our best soldiers in an enterprise of doubtful success at that season, but to have waited till spring.

All this time one began to feel anxious as to what was going on in Poland, where several attempts to dislodge the Germans had been repulsed, particularly in the region about the Bzura river. One felt especially displeased with the manner in which the official communiqués were worded, and at the utter inefficiency also displayed in this region by the Intelligence Department, an inefficiency of which the Grand Duke and his Staff seemed to be quite unconscious. For instance, in a dispatch dated February 11th, 1915, occurred the following curious phrase: "The German concentration in Eastern Prussia was disclosed on February 4th, but the extent of this concentration could only be established some days later. Not being able, owing to the lack of railways, to assemble adequate forces with the necessary rapidity on the East Prussia front, we decided to withdraw from Eastern Prussia to the frontier, and continue further towards the Niemen and the Bobr."

This explanation was severely commented upon. How was it, people naturally asked, that with an army of spies we could not be acquainted with such an important fact as the large concentration of enemy forces close to

us? It could not have been achieved in a day, therefore we must have been singularly badly informed by our scouts not to have ascertained what was being done and made our dispositions accordingly. Then again, how did it come about that, after the vast sums which had been spent to enlarge our network of railways all over Poland, they were found to be so inadequate that we could not even bring together in three days sufficient troops to meet the onslaught of the adversary? If we were so utterly unprepared for war, we ought to have kept this more in mind when parleying with Austria, at the back of whom we knew was the most formidable military force in the world.

As if to give more weight to these criticisms, which, especially in Moscow, were expressed quite openly, the news arrived that the Germans by a masterful surprise movement had invaded the Baltic provinces, and were advancing towards Libau, which they took a few days later.

The murmurs heard on all sides became louder and louder, and even some strictly censored newspapers ventured to ask what was wrong with our military administration, and where were the successes promised when the war broke out. The friends of the government replied to these questions that we had conquered Galicia and were installed in Lemberg, but nevertheless everybody felt that even the possession of Lemberg was not sufficient to compensate us for our heavy reverses in Eastern Prussia and in the Carpathians.

The pinch of the war was also beginning to be felt in the increased cost of living. In Petrograd especially provisions became scarce and most expensive. Street riots took place in the workmen's quarters of the town, near the Poutiloff factory, which was always more or less a centre of revolutionary propaganda. The police interfered and soon put an end to the disturbance; but a few butchers' shops had been plundered. This constituted a

precedent which, unfortunately, was to be exploited later on by the enemies of order, who began an agitation that gradually extended over the whole country, and culminated in the terrible excesses which took place in Moscow, Kiev, and other towns, where, under the pretext of chastising the Germans, the mob completely wrecked shops and houses belonging to Russians.

Petrograd at that particular moment became the centre of a secret agitation affecting almost all the population, who remained outwardly silent for fear of punishment. The reactionary party began looking for someone upon whom the responsibility for our failures could rest, as the Grand Duke Commander-in-Chief could not be blamed. Thus began the idea that we had been betrayed, as the French army had been in Metz in 1870, by someone on the Staff, who kept the enemy informed as to our intentions and movements, enabling them to attack us where we were most vulnerable.

Several people were arrested and taken to the fortress, to be sent afterwards to Siberia, and denunciations—before which those practised in Venice at the time when its Republic was ruled by the famous Council of Ten would have paled—began to pour in from all sides. It became a kind of sport for unprincipled people to satisfy grudges against this or that person by denouncing them to the military authorities as German spies. Instead of proceeding to find out the truth concerning these charges, the authorities simply arrested the persons complained about, locked them up at once, and left them to establish their innocence later.

For all that, the revolutionary agitation which had already manifested itself after the first weeks following upon the declaration of the war, increased in intensity, and extended to persons who, until that time, had never thought about politics. The number of wounded who were brought every day to the capital began painfully to

impress even the man in the street, for whom the arrival of the trains bringing these victims to Petrograd had at first afforded a kind of sad occupation. All the news from the provinces spoke of hospitals full to overflowing, and of misery defying description. The soldiers returning from the battle fronts, when talking with their friends and relatives, also told tales of horror that made one's hair stand on end; and the enormous number of women in mourning one met in the street added to the general gloom. The Red Cross worked incessantly, and the higher classes of society, including the Empress and her daughters and the other members of the Imperial family, were unwearied in their efforts to alleviate the prevalent suffering. Notwithstanding, privation and discontent threatened to sweep away the existing order of things. Russia was standing on the brink; she was preparing herself for the Revolution which those who understood the inner life of the country had prophesied would be the immediate consequence of the war.

Amid this anxiety the news reached Petrograd of a real and great success, the first for many months. Przemysl, that fortress which we had been besieging since September of the previous year—Przemysl, the stronghold of Galicia, which had been declared by the Austrians to be absolutely impregnable—Przemysl had fallen into our hands!

CHAPTER VIII.

PRZEMYSL.

IMMENSE joy spread all over Russia when the news arrived that Przemysl had fallen (March 21st, 1915). For months we had been besieging it; for months the Germans had gone on repeating that this famous fortress could hold out; it was so well armed that there was no possibility of Russia getting in. General Seliwanov, who was in command of the investing army, believed himself that Przemysl would hold out for three or four months longer than it actually did. And indeed such might have been the case had General Kousmanek been possessed of more determination, and especially had he been able to keep his Staff and the officers of the garrison in order. During the whole of the siege they had denied themselves nothing, lived upon the fat of the land, and recoiled at the prospect of having to endure privations. As soon as food began to get scarce, therefore, they insisted upon an unconditional surrender, not troubling in the least about the fate of the soldiers composing the garrison of the ill-fated fortress.

The Austrians on this occasion, as on so many others during the campaign, lacked backbone. When Przemysl was first invested, its commander, expecting every day to be relieved, told his Staff that he had made up his mind to hold out to the last man and to the last round of ammunition. He never troubled, however, about the maintenance of order in the town, and he took absolutely no steps to regulate the distribution of provisions, allowing the citizens

absolute, liberty in that respect. As a result the Jews bought up everything, and later on retailed food to the inhabitants at famine prices. The officers used to take their meals in the best restaurants in the city, whilst their men had to put up with bad food; but it was the civilian population that suffered the most, especially the poorer classes, who had to endure continual hunger. Nevertheless a more stubborn resistance might certainly have been offered. Knowing this, the Russians were delighted when the Austrian stronghold capitulated, because the very fact that it did so seemed to indicate that the resistance of the army of Francis Joseph was broken, and the end of the war therefore approaching.

I remember a relative of mine writing me on that subject, that "a nation capable of surrendering a fortress of the importance of Przemysl, so wonderfully fortified and still well provisioned and armed, was not worthy of existence, and that the indifference with which the place was given up indicated a total absence of a sense of right and wrong, which in its turn pointed to Austria's imminent political downfall." Subsequent events were to prove how utterly my correspondent had been mistaken in his appreciations.

It is related that when General Kousmanek sent an officer to General Seliwanov to offer the surrender of the town, he had a long list of the conditions which he requested the enemy to grant. The first was that all the officers were to be allowed to return to Austria on parole, with their swords and baggage. The Russian Commander, indignant at this proposal, said ironically, "It is not usual in such cases to allow officers to escape free whilst their soldiers are interned." Kousmanek's representative did not understand the raillery hidden under the remark, and hastened to say, "Oh, but they would give their word of honour not to resume active service; you surely do not fear this." To which Seliwanov simply replied,

"Oh, no, I have no fear on that point; I know that your officers are not so eager to fight," and then resuming the principal subject of the conversation he declared that the only thing he would accept was an unconditional surrender, leaving it to the Grand Duke to decide what was to be done with the garrison.

The Grand Duke Nicholas showed himself generous; he gave orders to return their swords to General Kousmanek and his Staff, whom he had conveyed with great politeness to Kiev, where they were lodged in the house formerly occupied by the Governor-General and treated with the utmost courtesy. Very soon, however, their want of tact and general indifference to their position excited considerable indignation among the inhabitants of the town. Kousmanek and his officers seemed perfectly unconcerned, frequented the music-halls and restaurants of the place, and appeared to have the one aim of amusing themselves as much as they could. This callousness produced a deplorable impression, especially when it came to the knowledge of the Russian military authorities that some Austrian officers had tortured Russian soldiers who had fallen in their hands. Hearing this, the Grand Duke gave orders for the swords of Kousmanek and of the other members of his Staff to be taken away from them, and soon after this they were sent to Nijni Novgorod, on the Volga, where the absence of the Polish element deprived them of some of the enjoyments which their residence in the South had procured.

In Petrograd immense manifestations of enthusiasm took place when the fall of Przemysl became known. The Slavonic committees organised street processions, during which the crowds gave way to their feelings of joy and of loyalty. The Sovereign sent to General Seliwanov the order of St. George of the third class, together with his warmest congratulations, and for a few days the General became a national hero. According to the official com-

munication, the number of prisoners that fell into our hands after the capitulation of the fortress amounted to 126,000 officers and men, together with guns, ammunition, and provisions of every kind. The Austrians, however, had taken the precaution to destroy the forts by blowing them up by dynamite, but nevertheless the victory was a brilliant one, and inspired the Allies with the greatest hopes as to the future of the campaign.

The road to Cracow seemed now to be open for the Russian troops, and to this day it remains a mystery why that city was not attacked at that particular moment, for it would have been difficult for the Germans to make a good defence, as General von Mackensen had not yet begun the famous offensive movement that was to lead him not only towards Przemysl, but also to Lemberg and farther on.

The assurance of swift victory with which the surrender of the Austrian stronghold inspired the Russian Staff was such that it was deemed expedient for the Emperor himself to take possession of his new conquest. The Sovereign had already been several times to the front, and indeed had travelled a great deal all over Russia in order to inspect troops and hospitals. He had even been so far as the Caucasus to bid good luck to his soldiers there, and as he happened to find himself at the Headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas when the news that Przemysl had capitulated arrived, it was instantly decided that Nicholas II. should start for Galicia, so as to see for himself all the good things which his soldiers had done, and the addition to his vast dominions their bravery had brought to him.

To say that this journey was a pleasure to the poor Galicians would be trespassing considerably on the domain of truth. In Lemberg especially the arrival of the Tsar caused much annoyance and trouble to the unfortunate inhabitants, as they had to submit to all kinds of inconvenience from the authorities, who were afraid of some

attempt on Nicholas II. Drastic orders were issued to the effect that all the windows of the houses in the streets through which the Sovereign was to pass were to remain closed, whilst numbers of people, particularly among the Jewish population, were simply sent away from their homes for the time being, some being transported even to Siberia. Nevertheless, the Ruthenians, who from time immemorial had hoped for the annexation of their province to the realm of the Romanoffs, organised great demonstrations of loyalty. Deputations without number waited upon the Tsar, and expressed to him their joy at seeing him amongst his faithful subjects of Galicia. The Russian Bishop, sent from Petrograd by the Synod, met Nicholas II. with a speech, in which he spoke of the glory that had fallen to his share when he delivered the Ruthenians from the Austrian yoke. Two days were spent in Lemberg, whither for the occasion several Grand Dukes had also repaired, and the two sisters of the Tsar—the Grand Duchesses Xenia and Olga—who drove together with him through the conquered city. The Sovereign, accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, then repaired to Przemysl, where he was welcomed by the Governor-General of Galicia, Count Bobrinsky, and by a large number of officers. The fortress was shown to him in detail, and the fact of its having passed into the possession of Russia was extolled in several enthusiastic speeches. Nicholas II., in the few words which he addressed to the garrison, alluded to the importance of the fact, and expressed his great satisfaction at having been able to make the acquaintance of his Galician subjects. When he returned to Tsarskoye Selo, he signed in Brody, the former frontier town which had divided Austria from Russia, a rescript addressed to the Grand Duke Nicholas, in which he thanked him for all his efforts, and expressed his gratitude for the brilliant results obtained by his perseverance, adding that he was sending him as a sign of his approval a sword of St. George

with the handle set in diamonds, and the inscription, "To the conqueror of Galicia." Two months later Galicia was once more in the possession of Austria.

It was after the return of the Emperor to Tsarskoye Selo that I received from a friend in Petrograd the following letter:

"The Imperial journey to Lemberg and Przemysl has not been viewed with equal satisfaction by everybody. There are people who think that it was a little imprudent to treat the conquest of Galicia as a foregone conclusion. It would have been better in the opinion of those persons to have awaited a little in case Dame Fortune did not allow us to retain possession of either Przemysl or Lvoff. The fact is that there are rather disquieting rumours going about concerning our armies. It seems that ammunition is getting scarce, and the soldiers are getting tired. One has been wondering why, too, after the fall of Przemysl we did not push forward and try at least to seize Cracow; instead we seemed to have remained quiet and done nothing in some places, while attempting impossible things in others. It seems that General Ivanov suggested to the Grand Duke the opportunity of a raid forward that might, if nothing else, at least have frightened public opinion in Vienna. But the Commander-in-Chief, it seems, nurses great plans of destruction which he means to put into execution when the hour for them strikes, if it ever does.

"It is, of course, impossible to know exactly what really goes on at Headquarters, but if we are to believe some rumours, for which no one will become responsible, things are not quite as lovely as we are told and as they would like us to believe, owing to disagreements between the personages in command; and whilst the Grand Duke professes absolute certainty of winning a great victory within two or three months, and speaks of the conquest of Galicia in the same tone he would employ if referring

to that of Siberia by Ermak, some of his subordinates do not seem to be so sanguine, and complaints are heard concerning the spirits of the troops, at least in some regiments.

"It seems that when it was wished to bring into action the new guns which had been sent to us via Siberia, the men who were put in charge of them refused to handle them, saying that they had never seen such things before, and did not know what they were to do with them. As practically and to all purposes these guns are in no way different from those in use already, one cannot very well see where lies the objection.

"The real fact is that the army is getting just a little sick of being always compelled to retire, and of being sent to fight under impossible conditions. The attack on the Carpathians was judged very severely by the soldiers themselves, who said, before even they started, that they were being dispatched to certain death, because no one could hope to get through these mountains in winter. The morale of our men has been shaken, and this explains perhaps better than anything else the large number of prisoners which the Germans had made. The soldiers are put to far more work than they can perform, and half of them have their nervous system completely shattered; one does not remain with impunity for months under such a fire as that which the Germans keep pouring upon us. And then the army thinks, rightly or wrongly, that there is not enough care exercised as to its safety, that many regiments are uselessly exposed, and we are insufficiently fortified, in spite of all assurances to the contrary.

"In this as in everything else in Russia there has been negligence. Formerly the people did not notice when such was the case, but at present civilisation has made such progress, and instruction too, that the soldier knows very well when a mistake is made, and does not judge it leniently. There is, unfortunately, little unity in our High Command, owing principally to the fact that the

Grand Duke does not allow any of his decisions to be discussed, and this often produces discouragement more than anything else. It is all very well to talk about the joy with which people go to their death, but no one likes to die, and it is not inspiriting to know that there is far more chance of being killed than there would be if things were properly managed. Altogether, I should not be surprised if something very unpleasant were soon to occur, the more so as, in spite of what people say—that Germany has done all she could for her ally Austria, and that she cannot help her any longer, requiring all her strength to be able to stand against the French and British armies—I cannot bring myself to believe that she will not at the moment when we least expect it suddenly come forward with some such surprise as the one which she prepared for us at Tannenberg. No, the more I think about all this the more I regret that the Emperor was induced to go either to Lemberg or to Przemysl, on the principle that it is sometimes easier to take something than to keep it afterwards, and I am by no means certain that the peace treaty will leave us in possession of these two places."

In sharp contrast to this pessimistic letter stands another which reached me about the same time, and which constitutes a curious example of the diversity of opinion that divided the society of Petrograd all through the anxious period of war.

"You will have read in our papers all about the journey of the Emperor in Galicia. Nothing could have been wiser than the visit which he paid to his new dominions. Certain busybodies, always eager to prophesy bad things, had expressed the fear that he would not meet with a good reception from the inhabitants of Lemberg, which is supposed to be a very Austrian town. Events proved that all these apprehensions were wrong. The enthusiasm with which the population met our Sovereign defies descrip-

tion. The women were weeping, and the children kept throwing flowers on the Imperial automobile all the time. An old Ruthenian peasant, who had formerly been living at Volhynia, asked to be presented to the monarch. Kneeling before him, he kissed his feet, saying that now he could die, since God had granted him the happiness of knowing that his children were henceforth Russians. Everybody expressed delight that Austrian rule had at last come to an end. The Emperor seemed quite touched by all these proofs of affection, which evidently he had not expected, and said that as soon as the war was over he intended to come back to Galicia, together with the Empress and the heir to the throne.

"The Grand Duke, too, was radiant, and well he might be, because it is to his determination and courage that we owe the conquest of Galicia. As for the troops, nothing can give you an idea of their joy when the Emperor thanked them for their devotion to him and to Russia. Old soldiers wept loudly; no one who was present at the ovations given to the monarch in Przemysl will ever forget them. The dynasty has never been so popular as at present, and certainly this war will do away with the last remnants of revolutionary ideas that have survived the events of 1905. Autocracy has proved its strength, and will henceforth be as much liked in Russia as formerly it was hated. We are now looking forward to the next move, but no one doubts for one single instant that long before the autumn we shall have reached Vienna and Berlin, after which one may begin talking about peace. But practically our army has won the war."

A few days later, in fact less than a week after the Emperor Nicholas had visited Przemysl, disturbances broke out in Moscow, to which at first one did not attach particular importance, but which soon assumed rather wide proportions. They began by a manifestation of the

lower classes against the increased cost of living; prices grew daily more and more exorbitant. On the 18th of April a great crowd assembled on Preobragensky Square, and loudly expressed its dissatisfaction with the civil and military authorities, who, it was asserted, might have taken measures to bring provisions to the town, and to prevent the butchers and bakers raising prices out of all proportion. This demonstration was quickly suppressed by the police, and the streets cleared, but on the 21st and 22nd of April, after sunset, the riots were renewed, this time with much more violence than had been the case at first. Hooligans invaded Presnaya, one of the principal trading centres of Moscow, and, singing revolutionary hymns, proceeded to break shop windows, and to throw stones at the police when the latter attempted to disperse them. Troops had to be called out, and the crowds only retired when made to understand that fire would be opened against them if they resisted. On the next day the Prefect of the town issued a proclamation, in which he promised to do everything that lay within his means to put an end to the exactions of tradespeople who were seeking to exploit the people, but at the same time he begged the population of the old capital not to allow itself to become involved in excesses that would only give grounds to our adversaries for saying that we were so thoroughly demoralised that sooner or later the war would end for us in a general defeat. He implored all reasonable people to help him to maintain order, and added that if it were once more disturbed he would not hesitate to resort to the most energetic measures to re-establish it. At the same time he forbade people assembling in public, under severe penalties, and gave directions for all house doors to be closed from six o'clock p.m. until six in the morning. The population seemed to accept his orders, but, as will be seen later on, the disturbances about which I am speaking were but the prelude to far graver and more important

events that were to follow each other in quick succession within a very short time.

It is said that one of the reasons for this outbreak on the part of the Moscow population was the new interior loan for one milliard roubles which was announced just about that time. This colossal sum caused Muscovite trading circles to think deeply as to the financial future of the country. It was all very well to appeal to the patriotism of the nation, and to hope that it would open purses; but there was a limit to everything, and if the war were going to last much longer, no one could help wondering where the money was to come from to carry it on. A loan amounting to one milliard was an unheard of thing, and where was the guarantee that it would prove to be the last, even if it came to be covered, a fact about which many persons were sceptical? Before the war the country had been on the road to unusual prosperity; trade and industry had made gigantic progress. Now factories were at a standstill, some of their best workmen had either been expelled as belonging to the German nationality, or else were serving their country at the front; the fields remained uncultivated, and no one had the money to go on living on the same scale as formerly. Petrograd might forget all these things, or at least not speak about them, but Moscow had always shown more independence, and Moscow seemed bent upon making itself heard at this moment of national crisis.

In spite of these symptoms of discontent, the government did not feel any alarm as to the general situation. The great subject was the advance of the German armies in Courland, where they seemed to have settled just as well as in Poland, and where they undoubtedly were received with a certain amount of sympathy by the people, who had never become entirely reconciled to Russian dominion. Apprehension was felt in official circles that Marshal von Hindenburg, whose army had seized Libau

and was threatening Riga, projected an attack on Petrograd itself, so as to strike a great blow at the prestige of Russian arms. This unexpressed but very real fear caused the Grand Duke Nicholas to draw some troops from the Galician frontier, and thus to uncover the defensive line that had been established beyond the Dniester and the Bug, which perhaps was the very thing that the German Staff had desired, in view of the offensive movement that it meant to start against Galicia to recover that province—an idea to which no one had given even a thought in Petrograd.

In the meanwhile the resistance of the Austro-German troops in the Carpathians had at last been crowned with success, and after weeks of continual fighting our forces found themselves completely routed, and compelled to give up their attempt to force the awful mountain passes. They were driven into the plains, where the united armies of General von Mackensen and the Archduke Frederick began an offensive movement which no one had expected, and for which the Russian Staff was totally unprepared.

What had happened was this. The Germans, indignant at the want of courage and the ignorance displayed by the Austrian army and Austrian Staff, had insisted upon the conduct of military operations being entrusted to a German General, and Vienna had had to consent to hand over the further direction of the campaign to General von Mackensen, to whom was deputed the difficult task, not only of freeing Galicia from the invader, but also of breaking the Russian lines, and of trying to bring the Russian advance to a standstill.

This was perhaps not so difficult as it seemed at first sight. Our army was already considerably demoralised by its terrible experiences in the Carpathians, and was weakened by the magnitude of its losses. Moreover, the soldier began to feel some anxiety as to the fate of his family left at home, from whom he received no news

whatever. The new men who were drawn in masses every day to fill up the gaps caused by those who had succumbed, arrived with less enthusiasm, and if they still marched willingly, did so less joyfully. The initial mistake was in trying to persuade the army as well as the nation that the war would be over in a few weeks, and by keeping up their spirits with news of imaginary victories.

At the same time rumours began to go about that our French Allies had sustained most serious reverses. Whence these rumours originated no one could tell; a Prussian source is not at all improbable. But it is quite certain that our armies conceived the feeling that Germany was victorious in the West. This was most unfortunate, as it shattered the faith of our soldiers in our French Allies, and caused them to inquire what was the use of going on when our Allies were already completely annihilated and at the mercy of the common enemy.

If our Staff had had any common sense, it would have ended this gossip—for this, after all, was what it amounted to—by giving out a true and full account of the doings of our Allies, whether to our advantage or disadvantage, and thus proving that it did not fear the truth to be known. Instead of adopting this rational course, a stringent order was issued to the army not to indulge in any kind of conversation concerning the war. The result was that everybody talked about it in secret, and that the wildest tales were set going, and, what is worse, believed in most implicitly. One must not forget that the Russian moujik—indeed, the army is composed of moujiks—is inclined to listen to every fairy tale that is told to him. One can therefore imagine the commentaries that resulted from this order of the Commander-in-Chief. Almost every single man in the army got to think, and, worse than that, to believe, that not only we, but also our Allies, were beaten at every step and at every turn.

There was nothing more ridiculous than this attempt

to suppress the truth, a course adopted by the military authorities, by order of the Grand Duke; it only did harm to the military situation by discrediting the Staff, even among those who had at first considered that everything which emanated from Headquarters was as it ought to be. For instance, when Courland was invaded, all the communications on this subject represented this military operation as absolutely unimportant, and as being entirely outside of the attacking powers of the German army. One tried to picture it as being merely a foraging expedition that had been attempted in order to get hold of the potato crop of the Baltic provinces, but certainly not as an indication that the enemy meant seriously to establish himself in that part of the world, or to use it as a base for future movements. The telegram sent from Headquarters indicated that the German army had been so weakened by its terrible losses in Poland, as well as in the Carpathians, that it was entirely incapable of attempting any new offensive movement, such as a regular invasion of Courland and the Baltic provinces. In Libau everything likely to be of use to the enemy had been removed or damaged, so that the possession of that port would only be an embarrassment to the German army.

In the same spirit was couched an official communication which was sent to the Press when General von Mackensen began his famous offensive movement in the Galician plains.

"The demonstrations which the Germans have lately attempted to make against us," said this communication, "have been of a rather naïve character. Near to our positions of Rawa, on a front of ten Versts, the Germans sent into our trenches on the 10th of April last something like 18,000 shells; not far from Pilitze one could notice from our trenches on clear days how several battalions of the enemy were assembling and gathering together, so as to induce us to believe that they had received reinforce-

ments, and whenever they could do so they cried out to us that soon they would oust us from our positions. As for the Austrians, they resorted to every kind of stupid trick to persuade us that they were feeling perfectly happy and contented. In their trenches near Pilitze they used to give concerts, and to keep cheering continually, and shouting hurrah, no one knew why or wherefore. At the same time they used to simulate attacks by rushing out of their trenches, but as soon as a few of their men had fallen under our fire they hastened to get back under cover as quickly as they could. Some more serious demonstrations were made by the Prussians in the neighbourhood of Serafina and Ednorotze, and their losses on those two occasions amounted to several thousands of men. In the attack against Serafina all the four regiments composing the German detachment quartered near that place took part, but were repulsed by our advanced lines, without any outside help from our main troops, because it was at once observed that it was not serious, and was only an attempt to frighten us.

"The offensive Prussian movement in the direction of Schawli consisted of their occupying, after some slight engagement, the railway line of Libau Remny, between the stations of Mouravievo and Radziviliski. The real intentions of our enemy will probably become known before long; to judge them approximately at present it is necessary and most interesting to refer to the communications of the German General Staff concerning the so-called victorious advance of their armies in the north-west of Russia at the beginning of the campaign. One must notice that at that time all the serious battles which took place were referred to as being only engagements devoid of any importance, whilst at present every shot that is fired is described as having a decisive meaning for the future of the war, which is a distinct proof that the security as to its issue which existed at first has entirely disappeared."

One does not know which is the more to be admired, the stupidity of the man who wrote this marvellous description, or his own naïveté in supposing that anyone would believe it.

And whilst the Grand Duke was hoping to keep the knowledge of the real truth from the faithful subjects of his Imperial nephew, the armies of the Archduke Frederick and of General von Mackensen were pursuing their triumphal march in Western Galicia. After a resistance, during which all the best qualities of endurance that had always been one of the characteristics of the Russian soldier were manifested, the enemy at last forced our strong position behind the River Dunajec. We were compelled to effect a prompt retirement for fear of being cut from our communications with the main staff of General Ivanov. During that retreat the second as well as the right Russian armies suffered considerably, so that they could no longer attempt an offensive movement of any kind. Not only were the Russian positions on the line of the Dunajec stormed by the enemy, but they (the Russians) were constrained to begin a hasty withdrawal of their principal forces from Galicia. A few days more brought the Germans in sight of Przemysl.

General Ivanov asked the Grand Duke's orders, adding at the same time that he hardly thought that he could defend the fortress in its present dilapidated condition and with the insufficient number of troops at his disposal. Then appeared clearly the great mistake which had been made, when in order to meet the German attack in Courland our stand in Galicia had been weakened by a withdrawal of troops, of which the enemy had very quickly known how to take advantage. Trusting to St. Nicholas, his own and Russia's patron saint, the Grand Duke caused it to be said that he considered the offensive movement of General von Mackensen to be devoid of any serious importance, but at the same time he advised General

Ivanov that he had better avoid being besieged in Przemysl, and that he ought to gather all his forces in order to defend and retain Lemberg. The General understood what he meant, and by a very clever movement led his army away from Przemysl, whence he succeeded in carrying away all his artillery, ammunition, and baggage. Very soon General von Mackensen forced the last Russian line of resistance on the River Stryio, not, however, without having lost an enormous number of men, and having been compelled to renew several times his murderous attacks. The amount of ammunition used by the Prussians was tremendous, and the only wonder is that our troops could stand even for an hour the terrible shelling to which they were exposed. But at last their resistance was broken up, and this last battle decided the fate of Przemysl; General Ivanov retired toward a very strong line of defence near Grodek, and fell back upon it, hoping to be able to maintain himself there until help should reach him; and he started hastily to prepare behind it another line, where one could effect a further retreat should this prove necessary, a line which was, however, never completed, owing to the rapidity of General von Mackensen's movements. The fate of Przemysl was sealed, and on the third of June the German and Austrian armies entered it in triumph. The Russian occupation of the Galician stronghold had lasted about three months.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT RETREAT.

STRANGELY enough, the loss of Przemysl affected the Russian public less than one would have thought, and most certainly far less than the reverses in the Carpathians. The Grand Duke had so constantly found it necessary unflinchingly to send troops to their death in the endeavour to win a vital point that one was pleasantly surprised to find that for once he had decided that it would have been a useless sacrifice to defend a half dismantled fortress, the holding of which would have interfered with our new plan to stay the enemy advancing on Lemberg.

Other things also engrossed the attention of the country. There was the coming over of Italy to the Alliance. Then the Anglo-French attack on the Dardanelles also arrived most opportunely to divert people's thoughts from what was taking place in the Galician fields.

The entrance of Italy into the ranks of the Allies was, of course, an important event (May 23, 1915) and in Russian governmental spheres it created a great impression, and was hailed with excessive joy, but the nation did not seem to attach much importance to it. The Russian people were still too ignorant to realise what it really meant; and besides, all its attention was riveted upon England. Great Britain was popular not only in high spheres, but also in the hut of the moujik and among the army. The feeling of strong confidence in the fighting powers of the British Empire caused our public to watch with unusual interest the operations that were being conducted in the Dardanelles, and this interest eclipsed that

of the entrance of Italy into the conflict, as well as the significance of the steadfast march forward of the armies commanded by General von Mackensen.

The latter, however, most ably seconded by one of his lieutenants, General von Linsingen, with unusual determination set about the task of pursuing the advantages which he had already obtained, when he had obliged our army to evacuate Przemysl, and without giving them any rest, proceeded on his way toward Lemberg, driving back our troops steadily but continually, leaving them absolutely no time to breathe, far less to settle and fortify themselves anywhere. General Ivanov had believed he could hold the line behind which he had retreated on the San River, but an immense German force which was thrown against his positions compelled him to seek safer quarters. The great aim of the Germans was to break the resistance of our army, and to prevent them from holding together in one compact mass. This aim was not reached, because no more orderly retreat was ever executed than that of the Russians from Galicia. Nevertheless, the line of our retiring troops was broken in the valley of the lower San, south of Jaroslau, and it could not be closed up again. The Austrians threw in powerful forces, and helped General von Mackensen to carry on his offensive, attacking the several army corps which we had concentrated on the small river Lioubatchevka, where a fierce battle raged for three days without stopping. On the 14th of June the Russians, completely worn out, had to evacuate their positions, and the Germans got through on the north-west side of the town of Lioubatchev. This did not, however, prevent us from establishing ourselves anew beyond the River Tanew, where we were reinforced by fresh regiments, and together with them renewed a violent fight with our foe. The latter entered upon a new offensive movement, which had for its object the occupation of the region and town of Rawa Russka, an important railway junction,

and it threw numerous forces into this enterprise. Finally the Russians had once more to start retreating, which did not prevent the Grand Duke from declaring in his telegrams that the battle which had just been fought had turned out to the disadvantage of the enemy. On the 20th June the right wing of our army was entirely cut off from our main forces, and thrown across the Russian frontier. All the troops still left in Galicia gathered together by a wonderful manœuvre in the region of Lemberg, and the Austro-Germans prepared themselves for a fierce attack on Lemberg, occupying in the meanwhile with their advanced guard the region of Zolkiev, some seventeen miles north from that city on the Rawa Russka Railway, and thus threatened entirely to envelop our lines. It was therefore decided that it was better to evacuate Lemberg than to be seriously exposed to danger, and on the 22nd of June the Russians came out of the old Galician capital which they had held for ten months, and which they had declared that they would defend to their last drop of blood.

The road from Lemberg to Zloczow was vital to the German army if they wanted to pursue the retreating Russians. With such heroic courage, however, did the troops under General Ivanov defend this highway that even after a week's strenuous fighting the Prussians were unable to gain possession. The Dniester line also remained in our hands, and against it all the efforts of General von Mackensen were concentrated, in order to snatch it from us. At last Gnila Lipa was taken by storm, and several other important strategical points were seized by the Germans. There remained nothing but to admit the defeat, and this even the Grand Duke found himself constrained to do. The German officers who were engaged in this gigantic battle could not restrain their admiration for the courage displayed by the Russian troops. As one of them said to a friend of mine, "It would be disgraceful

on our part if we did not recognise the truth, and own that the Russians fought like heroes, with an utter indifference to death."

"The difficulties which our brave soldiers encountered were enhanced by the fact that their defence was not sustained by artillery. The fact was that we had lost so many guns, and had so few shells and ammunition left, that orders were given to economise. The artillery was the first to leave the field of battle, and the men had mostly to fight with the bayonet, and this against an enemy who kept pouring on them a most terrible fire. They were told to accomplish an almost impossible task, and they obeyed these commands with a spirit of self-sacrifice which hardly any other army in the world—with perhaps one exception, the British—would have displayed. The offensive movement of the Austro-German armies, which, unfortunately for us, had been crowned with such success, had been foreseen by most of our military critics, and even the *Russki Inwalid*, the organ of the War Office, in an article written in May, had warned the public that a gigantic offensive operation would probably be very shortly entered upon by the united Austro-German forces from Cracow. All the attention of the Russian Commander-in-Chief ought, therefore, to have been directed toward that danger, and every possible means taken to avert it, or at least to cause a diversion that would have lessened its effect. Instead of this, the Grand Duke caused a circular to be written and dispatched to the generals in possession of responsible commands, in which, with singular lack of foresight, he required them to pay instant heed to the soldiers of Jewish nationality serving under their orders, bidding them take care to dispatch them immediately into the interior of the Empire. At a time when every regiment ought to have been reinforced, men who for the most part had admirably performed their duty were taken away from them, and of course were not

replaced. Such were the famous tactics of the Commander-in-Chief.

Russia had remained unmoved after the battle of Tannenberg; it had not wavered in its faith when Marshal von Hindenburg had driven its armies out of East Prussia; it had not lost its confidence in its recuperative powers when its soldiers had been repulsed in their attempts to force the Carpathian passes. It had even accepted the surrender of Przemysl, that fortress which it had been told was indispensable to the further carrying on of the campaign; but it rose up in indignation when it heard that Galicia had been evacuated, and that Lemberg was once more in Austrian hands. It had set its teeth together and hoped against hope, trusted when there was no one to trust, made up its mind to a defeat due to unforeseen circumstances or to the numerical superiority of the enemy. It refused to bow down before a catastrophe which resulted from utter carelessness. The lack of shells and ammunition was condemned even by hitherto loyal organs of the Press as a national crime, and when one heard that the famous loan of one milliard roubles, which was issued about that time, and which the big banks almost entirely covered—the public not having taken kindly to it—was not sufficient to meet the liabilities entailed by the war, and that it was intended to apply to Russia's Allies to furnish the necessary money to pursue the struggle, then indignation got the upper hand of fear. The public demanded an explanation as to where all the cash had really gone, and how it was that, after milliards had been expended, we found ourselves without shells, guns, or ammunition, and that our soldiers had been driven to employ the bayonet as sole means of defence against an enemy who seemed to have unlimited explosives at its disposal.

Riots broke out all over Russia—in Kiev, Odessa, Kharkoff, even in distant Samara—and were repressed with excessive vigour, but not subdued. In the Poutiloff

factory, in Petrograd, on the 19th, 20th and 21st of June, most serious disturbances took place, under the pretext that the salaries paid to the workmen were totally inadequate to the exorbitant cost of living, consequent on the war. Other factories joined the movement, and the men refused to go on making the shells and explosives ordered by the government. Revolutionary literature was once more circulated, and numerous cries of "Down with the war!" were heard for the first time in Petrograd. Troops had to be called out to put an end to the disorders, and numerous arrests took place. A military ring was established around the Poutiloff factory, so as to prevent the workmen communicating with the outside world, but the soldiers, instead of interfering with them, sympathised with their movement. For the first time symptoms of dissatisfaction came to be noticed in the army.

In Petrograd, as well as in Moscow, the different political parties held meetings, during which the internal condition of the country as a consequence of the war was discussed. Even the semi-governmental party, which went by the name of Octobrists, declared themselves in favour of a prompt reunion of the Duma and the Council of State, and for the constitution of a responsible Cabinet, composed of members belonging to the principal political parties represented in those two assemblies. In Petrograd a number of deputies met under the presidency of M. Rodsianko, the President of the Duma of the Empire, and there it was established that everyone with feelings of patriotism believed that the country stood on the brink of a catastrophe which was inevitable unless the whole system of government were changed. The present Ministers had failed in their duty, and had applied all their energies to the suppression of every liberal movement having for its aim the regeneration of the country. The result was that the army had neither artillery nor ammunition; that millions of lives had been uselessly sacrificed; that

half of the troops sent to meet the enemy were untrained, and represented no fighting power whatever; that corruption had invaded every department; and that everywhere, not excepting the administration of the Red Cross, malversations without number had taken place. The fact that the only authority virtually existing in the country was the military only added to the general confusion, and gave rise to the most crying abuses. The only people who were allowed to exercise any influence in governmental spheres were the detectives, of whom the number had multiplied in an alarming fashion. These were the people to whom the Grand Duke listened; these were the men on whose reports he relied, and according to whose opinions he acted. A government responsible to the nation would alone be able to remedy all these evils, and in this opinion the deputies who had assembled under the presidency of M. Rodsianko agreed. At the same time none among them believed such a government could be established, unless the working classes entered into the fray, and gave their help to their representatives. But how was this to be done, considering the fact that the legislative chambers had been prorogued for an indefinite period?

Whilst these deliberations were going on, most terrible riots again broke out in Moscow. The news of this was at first suppressed by the censor, acting upon orders received from the Minister of the Interior, but it became nevertheless impossible to keep the knowledge of these disturbances from the inhabitants of the capital, where all kinds of rumours began to circulate, until at last the Grand Duke, upon whom all such things depended, was persuaded to issue an official statement of the events that had dishonoured the ancient Russian capital.

I am going to reproduce it here, as it is necessary my readers should become acquainted with all the circumstances attending the interior commotions which shook Russia as a consequence of the war, and because I might

be accused of exaggeration were I to say, in my own words, all that I know concerning this first manifestation of a people's fury, which marked the beginning of a new era in Russian national life. I must add that most certainly the riots that took place would never have been so acute had not the government excited the worst passions of the mob by allowing it to give way to an artificial kind of hatred against the Germans, which the authorities themselves had fanned and encouraged.

"On the 9th and 10th of June" (so runs the official communication) "street disturbances broke out in Moscow, brought about by unbalanced rumours.

"The riots started on the 8th of June, when a crowd of women, numbering something like 3,000, assembled on the Tverskoy square. They were mostly wives of soldiers now at the front, to whom the committee of the Empress, the Moscow section of which was presided over by the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, distributed needlework, so as to enable them to get a living. That committee held its sittings in the house formerly occupied by the Governor-General on the Tverskoy street. The women kept screaming that the lady in charge of the needlework department, Madame Madgaroff, had told them that she had received a communication from the commissariat of the army saying that no further needlework could be given by the committee to the women. They complained that Madame Madgaroff was a German, and that she turned into ridicule their patriotic feelings. They said also that Madame Madgaroff had told them to seek work at two Moscow firms (Mandl's and Reitz') who, she had ascertained, were willing to give them some. The women refused.

"A commissioner of police came out to reason with them; they told him their grievances, and asked him to pass them on to the newly-appointed Commander of Moscow, Prince Youssoupoff. The commissioner, desirous to keep

the women quiet, wrote a petition for them addressed to the Prince, which they took to his house.

"There they sent a deputation to Prince Youssoupoff, and, in a state of extreme agitation, awaited his answer. The deputation returned saying that the Commander of Moscow had told them he would examine the details of the affair and give them his reply on the next day.

"The inquiries which were made by the orders of the Prince established the following facts: The orders for needlework given by the commissariat of the army approached their completion in May, and on the 14th of that month a formal notice was given by the Empress's committee, acquainting the public with that fact, and the women were perfectly aware that the commissariat of the army did not see its way to give new orders. Nevertheless, when they came on June 8th to give up the work which they had had in hand, they demanded more, which was refused. This exasperated them, and they began to get riotous and to break windows. The president of the committee succeeded in quieting them for a time, with great trouble; soon afterwards they were again in an uproar, and this state of things lasted the whole day. It turned out that Madame Madgaroff was not a German, but a Russian, belonging to the Orthodox Church, and the widow of a former public prosecutor of Moscow, and that she could not in any way have offended the patriotic feelings of the women.

"On that same day there occurred at the Prochorov Cotton Manufactory several cases of acute internal inflammation among the workmen. About thirty-eight of them fell ill. Immediately it was said that the Germans had poisoned the well which supplied the drinking water consumed on the premises. A deputation from the workmen asked to see the managing director of the manufactory, and demanded the cause of the strange epidemic that had made its appearance among them, threatening to go on

strike unless the matter were satisfactorily explained. To pacify them he caused the water from the well to be analysed, and, of course, nothing calculated to harm anyone could be discovered. The workmen declared themselves satisfied, but somehow the rumour that all the wells of the city had been poisoned by the Germans spread throughout the factories of Moscow.

"In two quarters of the town, at Kogewnik and Danilov, these rumours were readily believed and the men stopped working. A procession carrying the national colours marched to all the factories in the neighbourhood, compelling the men to join in the strike. At the same time they insisted on the managing directors of the establishments where they were employed dismissing all the Germans who were still among them.

"In the Bromley Factory, situated beyond Moskwa, a crowd of men demanded with threats that two directors and an engineer should be instantly dismissed, under the pretext that one of them was a German, and the other two Austrians. One had some trouble to explain to the enraged workmen that the persons in question were Tcheques, and when they had grasped the fact the workmen went away, without creating any further disturbance.

"On the 9th of June people in the town were saying everywhere that the Germans meant to kill the Russians, and that the latter were going, as a punishment, to plunder their houses and belongings. Shopmen, justly alarmed, began closing their windows and putting up the shutters, but this availed them very little, because, beginning from that morning, for more than forty-eight hours, Moscow became the centre of the most terrible scenes of plunder, of destruction, and of fire, which no effort of the authorities could stop.

"In two places, the factories of Zindel and Schrader, events assumed a most serious character. The quarters occupied by the few Germans who were still employed

there were entirely plundered, and their owners roughly handled by the infuriated crowd.

"From that moment, and as if this had been the signal for a general riot, the most regrettable incidents took place.

"On the 10th of June, at about ten o'clock in the morning, a crowd assembled near the Borowitzky gate; it carried the national colours, and a portrait of the Sovereign. Suddenly someone began singing the hymn, 'Boge Tsara chrani,' others 'Long live the Emperor! Long live the Russian army!' to the sounds of which the mob, now much more numerous, marched to the Red Square and stopped before the monument of Minime and Pogarsky.

"At the same time another crowd that was much more violent rushed to the bazaar where are the principal shops of Moscow, and at once began plundering them without the least discrimination, throwing out of the windows all the goods it could not destroy at once or put into its pockets.

"The news that the town was being pillaged quickly got about, and everywhere enormous crowds gathered, and joined the rioters. All the shops and stores suspected of belonging to Germans in the Kitay Gorod were sacked, after which the mob divided itself into two groups: one of them repaired to the Lioubanka Street, whilst the other rushed to the Kouznetsky Most, where it entirely destroyed, not only the contents, but the buildings themselves, including the shops of Einem, Mandel, the Zindel Company, and the Karawan one. In the Miasnitzkaya Street all the shops with German names met the same fate, including the feather store of Strauss, which was broken into, and its contents scattered about, so that in a short time the whole of the Miasnitzkaya Street was strewn with feathers that flew about in all directions. The thoroughfare was littered with books, papers, broken fragments of furniture, and machinery.

"The store of Einem was barricaded with iron shutters, but these were soon broken open by the crowds. A fire burst out in the store whilst the pillage was going on. The crowd started at once putting it out, even calling on the fire brigade to help, and then, leaving the firemen in possession, went on further, destroying everything in its way. The fire was quickly put out, after which the mob returned and resumed its interrupted work of destruction. The curtains in the windows of that store were taken down, and torn into small shreds, which the people used as pocket-handkerchiefs.

"The Kouznetsky Most presented a terrible picture of destruction. There the great furniture store, a photographic studio, and a musical instrument emporium had been entirely sacked, from the second storey of which large pianos and pianolas had been thrown into the street. The whole length of the Kouznetsky Most was so blocked with débris of all kinds that it was next to impossible to cross it. The mob also pillaged the German shops, or those which were believed to belong to Germans, in the different quarters of the town, such as the Arbat, the Neglinoy, the Ordinka, the Marossienka, and a part of the Stretienka. Indeed, in the beginning of the riot the mob simply destroyed all that fell into its hands, but did not steal anything.

"This restraint can be explained by the circumstance that, when the outbreak started, the crowds obeyed the orders which were given to them by their leaders, who had an exact list of the different German or Austrian places it was intended to sack. The leaders went into each house, and asked proofs that it did not belong to a German. When these were forthcoming, they went out quietly, and told their followers to pass on, which is why the mob showed great care at first in sparing all the establishments belonging to Russians, and subjects of states not at war with us. But this took place only in the beginning of the

disturbances.. Later on, even their leaders lost all control over the infuriated masses, further inflamed by the loot of the wine-shops which the city contained. Toward evening these masses of intoxicated people, among whom were many women and even children, not only sacked the town indiscriminately, but also set fire to it, wherever it could. One met everywhere women and young girls carrying about incendiary materials. One could also see decently dressed people dragging along all that they could lay their hands upon in the way of furs, clothes, and other covetable things. At last the crowd pillaged wherever it could, and wherever it went, and everything that stood in its way, so Russian shops and stores, and those of neutrals, or natives of Allied countries, suffered just as severely as German.

"Altogether during those two days there were more than eighty fires in different parts of the town. The fire continued until the 10th of June. At one moment the heat was so intense that the fire brigade was baffled. Several houses and flats occupied by Germans in different parts of the town were also set alight, and entirely burnt down. This sort of thing went on during the whole of the 9th and 10th of June.

"The municipal council met in a hurried sitting and discussed the serious state of affairs. The Commander-in-Chief of the town, Prince Youssoupoff, attended this meeting, together with the former Prefect, General Adrianoff. The Council requested the authorities to put an end to the riots, and also begged to have a guard placed near all the stores where spirits were kept, so as to prevent the mob from getting them.. Full liberty of the Press to report all that had taken place was also desired. On the 11th of June the authorities took measures to put an end to the disturbances, and succeeded in doing so. Troops were called out, and patrols of Cossacks went about in all directions of the town. The mob was threatened with

severe punishment if it persisted in its excesses, and numerous arrests were made. In some places the troops fired upon the crowds. By order of the Commander-in-Chief the different banking establishments in the town were kept closed until further notice.

"According to information which the authorities of the town were able to gather together, it seems that during these two days 475 stores and shops were looted, and 217 private dwellings. So far as it was possible to ascertain, the damage exceeded the sum of forty millions of roubles; details have not yet come to hand concerning 122 more stores and 50 private dwellings. Among the properties destroyed, 133 belong to German or Austrian subjects; 579 to Russian subjects, or persons belonging to Allied countries; and 90 to people with absolutely Russian names. A great number of firms found themselves obliged to close entirely. The insurance companies held an extraordinary meeting to decide whether or not they were responsible for the destruction caused by the riots. This question, so far, has not been settled. It is reckoned that the damage done by fire alone surpasses twenty millions of roubles.

"On that same day, the 11th of June, the Commander-in-Chief in Moscow caused the following notice to be put up in the streets: 'The disturbances which have taken place during the two last days in Moscow have spread to several neighbouring towns, where riots have also occurred. I hereby declare to the population that I forbid the holding of any meeting whatsoever, and that, should any attempt to disturb the peace again take place, I shall suppress it with the greatest energy, and punish most severely those guilty of it.'

"A proclamation to the same effect was published by the newly appointed military Prefect, General Klimovitch."

I shall presently speak of the impression produced in

Petrograd by these sad events. They were but the prelude to a vast revolutionary movement which will very soon make itself felt everywhere more acutely than in Moscow. Sensible people wondered how the government that suppressed instantly any private meeting of a political party did not interfere earlier. It was surely a case for the military authorities to make the population of Moscow realise that martial law existed. Unfortunately, the Grand Duke was busy with other things. The suppressing of some newspaper or the other seemed to him to be of more importance than sending troops to protect private property against an exasperated mob. He was perhaps secretly glad at this proof of the animosity inspired by Germans everywhere in Russia, and failed to realise that the scenes which had been enacted in Moscow were but the prelude to graver events that might oblige him to give his consent to the conclusion of a peace the country had begun to clamour for at last.

Whilst Moscow was being sacked, the General Staff was busy preparing a decree ordering 70,000 Jews in Courland to leave that province within twenty-four hours, and go into exile without being allowed to take any of their property with them. The decree also withdrew all the ambulances which Jews had opened at the beginning of the war for our disabled and wounded soldiers.

In Petrograd, however, public opinion began to agitate against the government in an alarming manner, and some people bolder than the others succeeded in acquainting the Emperor with the feelings of discontent that were everywhere obvious. The Ministers were made the object of most violent attacks, even from their former partisans, and at last M. Maklokov, who had been in charge of home affairs for nearly five years and who was considered to be a tool of the Grand Duke Nicholas, was obliged to retire. The position of M. Sazonov was also reported to be shaky, and finally it was said that M. Gorémykin would soon be

superseded as President of the Cabinet by a younger and more energetic personality.

The Emperor, who happened to be at the front when the events I have just related took place, called together a meeting of the Cabinet, to which all the Ministers were summoned, and at which the Grand Duke Nicholas was also invited to be present. The military situation was discussed in full, together with the symptoms of discontent that had lately appeared in the country. One of the results of this conference was the resignation of the War Minister, General Soukhomlinov, who was made the scapegoat for other people's mistakes. The old warrior had tried to tell the truth when it was too late, and when already his influence and popularity had been wrecked by the march of events. The last thing which he told the Tsar when taking leave of him was that the summoning of the Duma and of the Council of State was a necessity, because the responsibility for what was to happen further ought not to rest upon the Sovereign alone. The news from the seat of war was daily becoming more alarming. The Austro-German armies had crossed the Dniester, and were advancing into Poland as quickly as possible. We had been obliged to retire behind the Bug, and most probably Warsaw was going to be seriously threatened. It required the efforts of the whole nation to fight with the enemies from outside as well as from inside, who were working for the destruction of the Imperial power and prestige, and the patriotism of the two Legislative Assemblies was required to face the storm that was sweeping over Russia.

The departure of General Soukhomlinov was very much regretted by the Liberal parties, who had held him in high esteem. He had been the victim of circumstances. An honest man, who had scorned to enrich himself as many others would have done in his place, he had held himself aloof from all the intrigues and the low *tripotages* that took place in the War Office, and he had always

behaved like a gentleman. His successor was an unknown quantity, and was, moreover, known to be a favourite of the Grand Duke, which last fact was sufficient in itself to make him unpopular.

A few days before General Soukhomlinov had handed in his resignation the Emperor had appointed a new Minister for Home Affairs—Prince Nicholas Sherbatov. This choice caused considerable surprise, as he was a man of distinctly Liberal sympathies, who till then had never been named as a possible candidate for a ministerial chair, owing to his well-known independence of character. His was the difficult task of trying to put an end to the growing discontent that had been agitating the whole of Russia ever since the truth had become known in its entirety of the appalling disaster that had overtaken our troops in Galicia.

CHAPTER X.

Pandemonium in Moscow.

It will add interest to the previous chapter to give some extracts from letters which were brought to me at the time of these riots by friends who came to Sweden from Petrograd. Owing to their official positions or their political activities they were able to judge of events in Russia.

This is what a member of the Duma wrote to me:

"You will have been shocked beyond words to read in the papers the description of the sad events that have transformed Moscow into a kind of pandemonium, where the thirst to kill and to destroy was the only apparent aim of an exasperated multitude. No one in official spheres has been able to find out on whom rests the real responsibility for these excesses. When one thinks that the town is overflowing with spies and detectives, it seems almost incredible that the authorities were not aware of what was going to happen. The most probable thing is that they knew all about it, but thought that it would be a good thing if the feelings of the multitude were allowed to get the upper hand, and an anti-German riot arose, which would in a certain sense justify the anti-German measures our government had taken, or was going to take, by making them appear as a concession to the patriotic feelings of the nation. The fact is the government is in a mess, and would like to divert the attention of the public from the utter incapacity which it has displayed in the matter of national defence. The Moscow riots might

have been stopped at once if only the troops had been called out, or even if the police had interfered; instead, a friend of mine, whom I know to be incapable of exaggeration, and who happened to be in the street whilst the plundering was going on, saw with his own eyes a gorodovoy [policeman] help the crowds to throw a piano out of the window in the Lioubianka Street. All the spirit stores were broken open, and the mob that since the beginning of the war had such difficulty in getting drink, in no time became totally intoxicated, in which condition it went on for two days looting everything and destroying and burning what could not be carried away. The authorities simply did nothing, though Prince Youssoupoff promised action. It was only on the third day that, on the receipt of orders from Petrograd, the Commander of the town issued a proclamation, in which he threatened the population with severe punishment. Troops were then called to disperse the crowds, and in several places they fired upon the populace, killing and wounding a number of people. The inhabitants of the town were forbidden to leave their houses after ten o'clock at night without special permission, an idiotic measure, because it only annoyed peaceful people. Doctors were allowed to go their rounds, provided they had some papers of identity about them; but when medicine was wanted during the night from the chemist, no one except a doctor could get it. People wishing to leave the town by a late train had to ask permission to do so, and were required to present a railway ticket as a proof that they really meant to travel. This led immediately to the establishment of a secret agency that provided tickets for a consideration to those who for one reason or another wanted to be out after ten o'clock.

"Except for these restrictions nothing effective was done to prevent the recurrence of the scenes the traces of which are everywhere to be seen in all the principal streets; the houses with their broken windows and blackened

walls stand as a memento of the fury of a mad crowd which more than anything wanted an outlet for its rage.

"The news which filters through from the front shows a general discontent among the army. All the wounded soldiers who are brought back from the advanced positions tell the same tale of sufferings unrelieved, and lives uselessly sacrificed. Without knowing it, they repeated the words of Hamlet, 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.' The War Office is the most blamed and condemned for the general disorder that exists in all its departments; but it seems to me, as well as to all impartial people, that it would be wrong to make it solely responsible. During the time that he had been in charge General Soukhomlinov had done all that lay within his means to regulate matters, but he had the corruption of his subordinates to fight against. Nothing could be bought for the needs of the army without certain persons in each department making large personal profits out of every transaction. I know firms abroad who at different times offered the government shells and ammunition at most reasonable prices, and who could not do any business, because the 'baksheesh' which they tendered was not sufficient for our lords of the War Office. The consequence was that double their real value was paid for things of inferior quality. The regulations made it impossible for General Soukhomlinov to make any contracts direct with army purveyors, as such contracts are always entrusted to a commission, which has the casting vote. The result is that during the recent Galician battles our soldiers were told to defend themselves with the bayonet, as no ammunition could be distributed to them. A singular thing is that many members of the commission have coincidentally become much more wealthy. All this was revealed suddenly, and the shock caused by these revelations has been terrible. Can you wonder, therefore, that its effects have brought about unrest, especially in view of the fact that

the government seems to give its attention to trifles the discussion of which only enrages the public? For instance, the other day a long decree was published in the *Official Gazette* announcing that a new uniform had been instituted for the members of the Red Cross, and giving a minute description of it. Naturally, the people thought and said that this was hardly an opportune time for such an innovation, and that it would have been better to have bought more shells and better guns.

"The resignation of M. Maklokov has, of course, been commented upon everywhere; personally, I do not think it was due to the riots of Moscow. His position had been insecure, as he was reproached for not doing anything except sending people into exile for no reason but that their faces did not appeal to his sympathies. The choice of his successor was rather a surprise. You know him, so I will not say much about him. He is a gentleman by birth, an aristocrat by education, and a Liberal by opinions; at least, he was one until now, but people change when they find themselves in a responsible position, and it is yet a question whether he will allow himself to be submerged in the sea of bureaucratism in which he has been plunged. The interview which he gave to the representatives of the Press had been very favourably commented upon, and his promise to call the Duma and the Council of State in an extraordinary session has been hailed with joy by all parties. It is certain that this measure is demanded everywhere, but I question whether it is quite wise to execute it if the government does not mean to change its policy. It is not to be doubted that the Chambers will find many subjects of complaint both against the Home Office and the War Office, and their criticisms may lead very far. The Sovereign, who would now have a chance to become popular if he would only take seriously in hand the grave question of the national defence, is, unfortunately, completely subjugated by the Grand Duke

Nicholas; and the Grand Duke himself, with all his qualities, is a man who will never own when he is in the wrong, and who believes in nothing but sheer force. If we were wise, and the government decided to do what the nation requires, we should give up for the present the attempt to make a stand against the Austro-German armies; we should entrench ourselves in the kingdom of Poland and, if need be, behind the Niemen and its line of fortresses, and we should await there the enemy's attack, working toward the reorganisation of our troops and the making of ammunition in sufficient quantity. Unfortunately, this is the very thing which we will not do, and this change in the High Command only adds to the general confusion.

"You may perhaps smile at what I am going to tell you, but if Germany is going to be beaten it will be entirely due to England and to its rational manner of leading the war. England will be the saviour of the world and of its civilisation, because England is the only nation strong enough to go on with its task, without making any particular person responsible for the general mistakes. Britain has determination, money, men; and its patriotism is an intelligent one. More than that, all its political parties, in moments of crisis like the present, lay aside their differences and work together for the common good. With us, whenever anything untoward occurs, we hasten to dismiss the first person upon whom we can fix the responsibility for the mishap. The fact is that we are not yet advanced enough to admit that we have been at fault, and, besides, our political life is entirely corrupted by the detestable habit we have of mixing the police in everything we do. Our government till now has entirely been in the hands of more or less educated detectives. In England it has always remained in the control of gentlemen; there lies the difference, and I assure you it is a very real one.

"You will say that this is a pessimistic letter: it cannot be otherwise; indeed, the whole of Russia is pessimistic

at the present moment. We know that we stand on the brink of a revolution, and when the war is over the loyalty of the army will disappear. Till now all the revolutionary attempts which have been made in our country have proceeded from what we call the *Intelligentsia*; in future the workmen will take the lead—they are admirably organised, and understand far more about political life than they are given credit for; the army also, who, to its detriment, having seen the disorder which reigns in high places, will try to avenge its wrongs.

"Taking all these symptoms into consideration, it can safely be assumed that Russia, during the next ten or fifteen years, will be a very nice country not to live in."

This was the impression produced by the developments which the war had brought about in the public and the national existence of Russia on a man of high intelligence, who, though a Liberal in many of his views, had nevertheless constantly been the supporter of a Conservative form of government. His opinions were also shared by the extreme Radicals, who for once put aside their Anarchist leanings, and tried to examine the situation from the purely patriotic side. One of them communicated with me his appreciations in the following terms:—

"The Moscow riots have pained me most deeply. They have, in a certain sense, sounded the knell of our hopes to see a Radical government established at last in Russia, and our whole party will be made responsible for excesses which it has neither inspired nor wished for, and, on the contrary, severely censured. Though we are the first to admit the lamentable mistakes and errors of government made by spies who have ruled over us for so long, we would not have liked an outbreak of lawlessness, such as we had the other day, to cause the overthrow of the government. What we have seen in Moscow was a real revolution, and nothing else; and, unfortunately, those who were guilty

of it were given the opportunity, by the indifference and passive attitude of the authorities, to realise their own strength—the most dangerous thing which could have occurred. The fact is that our government has become unhinged, and, in its fear of publicity being given to its mistakes, loses sight of the very things that ought to be kept in mind. The indignation against the Grand Duke, in consequence of our reverses in Galicia, increases with every day. No one dreams of accusing Soukhomlinov of this disaster, as everybody is aware that he has been made the scapegoat for other people's sins. He was rarely allowed to give an opinion during the whole course of the campaign. Whenever he ventured to speak he was immediately silenced with the remark that it was the Staff alone who was responsible for the conduct of the war, and that his duty consisted in providing men and ammunition.

"The men Soukhomlinov *could* find, but ammunition could not be got so easily. We lost a considerable number of guns and ammunition in Eastern Prussia as well as in the Carpathians, where, contrary to all common sense, we sent out troops at a time of the year when, even without any resistance on the part of the enemy, they could hardly have struggled through with so enormous a quantity of baggage. In Galicia, instead of fortifying ourselves, we began at once to Russify the country; we brought to it priests, monks and nuns, detectives and officials, but we never gave a thought to the necessity of establishing ourselves there on a strong military basis, which would have allowed us to withstand any attack from our foes. The government affirmed that Lemberg's fortifications had been strengthened considerably after the town had fallen into our hands, but with the exception of a few ditches that had been dug here and there nothing was done, though I believe large sums of money were given for that purpose. The usual Russian carelessness once more came to the front, and we fully believed that, since we had been able to

occupy Galicia, a miracle of St. Nicholas would allow us to keep it. The awakening has been most unpleasant, and it is not to be wondered at if people are beginning to question whether all the sacrifices which have been required from the nation will ever be atoned for, and, too, they are asking how long this war—which we were told was going to be short and victorious—is still going to last.

"In the meanwhile the Staff goes on publishing telegrams which are no longer believed, and the whole country is slowly rising to a state of agitation which is bound to end in serious trouble. The consciousness of the coming danger has decided my friends to refrain from any criticisms as to the conduct of the campaign, and induced them to give their entire support to the government, provided the latter decides at last to listen to the voice of public opinion, and to call to its help the representatives of the nation, whose patriotism and energy would be a considerable asset to its authority. Let us hope that it will see that in this way only can the mistakes that have already been made be avoided in the future.

"I feel convinced that the Emperor, were he only properly informed as to the desires and wishes of the nation, would be the first to make an appeal to its patriotism, and to ask it to lighten the responsibility of the momentous decisions that he will very soon be called upon to take. Ah! if only we understood in Russia the true meaning of that word patriotism as England does, our chances of retrieving ourselves would be much greater. Remember what I tell you: it is England who will win the war; England who will save civilisation and Europe from the yoke of militarism; England alone who will have the decisive voice in the conclusion of the peace which must some day or other be concluded; and it is to be hoped that her Allies will be wise enough to leave her a free field as to its conditions, as well as to the moment when it ought to be made. Great Britain has statesmen and diplomats worthy

of the name, and an experience of parliamentary and political life that no other nation in the world has yet been able to acquire. If the British Empire were not on our side, I should be the first to tell my country that we ought to conclude peace at any price, and this as soon as possible—to-day rather than to-morrow."

I have quoted these two letters, as it seems to me that they give a better idea than is otherwise to be obtained of the different opinions which, at this stage of the war, were dividing the public mind in Russia. These letters are also curious in the manner in which they both say the same thing, namely, that of all our Allies it was in England that we had greatest confidence. And following in that line I shall go further than they did, and say that it was the fact of Britain having joined us that more than anything else convinced the majority of the Russian public of the justice of our cause.

Nevertheless, in those first days of July, 1915, the situation, from the military as well as from the inner political side, was anything but pleasant. There was no cohesion, no unity in our government. We had been compelled to abandon the conquests which had been acquired at the price of heavy sacrifices of life and money, and over the possession of which the whole of Russia had rejoiced; we were threatened by a cruel and crafty enemy on our own territory; we had seen some of our richest and most prosperous provinces devastated; we had lost millions of men, a good deal of our prestige, and even more of our confidence in an ultimate victory. The government was discredited; the General Staff despised when not abused; revolution and discontent were brewing everywhere. Can it be wondered at, therefore, that those who had the opportunity of watching this decay of our national prosperity looked with anxious and despondent eyes toward the future?

It was precisely at this moment that two memorable incidents came to give some light to what otherwise was a very dark position. The English and French forces seemed at last to be making some progress in the north of France, and the whole of the British Empire was rising like one man—called out of its apparent apathy by the eloquent voice of Mr. Lloyd George—and beginning to work at the making of munitions with an energy that extended to all classes of the nation. The energy with which Britain set to work to supply the new calls which the War Office made upon her, and also to help her other Allies, came as the most welcome news to cheer people in Russia. One heard from all sides that at last one could hope the Germans would get what they deserved, and that the whole current of the war would change. Great Britain's popularity increased with every day, and perhaps the greatest service which she rendered to us in those critical times was to rouse and fire anew our confidence in an ultimate victory, which had been so rudely shaken by the fall of Lemberg and the abandonment of Galicia.

The other event was also an important one. The Tsar—who, whatever has been said about him, was the most sincere patriot that Russia possessed—instead of giving way to nervousness, and feeling that the ground was falling under his feet, called together a meeting of the Cabinet, and heard all that his Ministers had to tell him, forbearing to reproach them, or the Commander-in-Chief, for defeats which must have been the more painful to him because he had been deluded the whole time by false reports. An Imperial Rescript addressed to the Prime Minister, M. Gorémykin, gave him directions to call together the Duma as well as the Council of State in extraordinary session for the next month.

The Sovereign had of his own accord met his people, and asked them to stand by his side in that hour of national danger and peril.

CHAPTER XI.

Apprehension in Petrograd.

During the first week of July, 1915, the position of our armies was the following one. We had been compelled to retire behind the Vistula, north of the Polish town of Sandomir, and were contemplating a movement to extend our front beyond that river; failing which, the orders of the Grand Duke were to entrench behind the Narew and evacuate Warsaw. This last-mentioned resolution was not taken without considerable hesitation. The Commander-in-Chief understood very well the terrible impression it was bound to produce all over Russia, coming as it would after his repeated assurances that the Polish capital would be defended at all costs. But the total absence of ammunition, which had at last to be acknowledged, made it quite impossible to hold the town against so formidable an enemy. The lack of this most necessary means of defence had been persistently denied by the Grand Duke; whether he really was not aware of it himself, or whether he wished to screen his subordinates, it is difficult to say, but the fact is that he refused to admit it. At the same time he could not hide from the general public the knowledge of the retreat of his armies before the terrible thrusts of the united forces of General von Mackensen and the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand. The necessity to keep united the armies of General Ivanov in the south and General Beliaev in the north had much to do with the determination to start upon a strategical retreat, which, whilst abandoning to the Germans the whole kingdom of Poland, together with a part of Lithuania, would at the

same time spare and keep intact the principal forces which Russia still possessed, and on which, later, it could rely to take the offensive, the thought of which had never been abandoned by the Russian Staff. But it must not be supposed for a single instant that the sacrifice thus involved was not a heavy one. For the Sovereign it must have been uncommonly painful. Warsaw was considered the third town in the Russian Empire; it was the capital of the kingdom of Poland—always counted as one of the most precious gems in the Russian crown—and it commanded some of the most fertile provinces. Such a blow no one had expected, and it was but natural that the people who ought to have prevented a calamity of this magnitude should have been bitterly reproached on all sides. A storm of abuse was launched at the head of the Grand Duke Nicholas and of his subordinates, especially of General Januschkievitch, who, as head of the Staff, ought to have been better informed as to the real conditions. The government found itself in a most difficult position, because it could not be denied that great mistakes had been made through the maladministration of the War Office. But as an excuse it must be said that at first our Allies also had not been able to keep pace in the important matter of armaments and ammunition; not one of the Allies had been prepared for such a prodigal expenditure of shells. Germany, on the contrary, had been quite ready. I do not hold a brief for the Grand Duke Nicholas, whose mistakes I am quite ready to admit, but this much must in all fairness be said in his favour; he had, like all strong characters, the qualities of his defects, and the courage and stubbornness with which he made up his mind to retreat before the storm of the German invasion deserve the highest praise. A weaker man would never have found himself able to face the torrent of abuse which described his action as something not very far from treason; a less self-opinionated nature would have been troubled as to

the right course to pursue, and dismayed at the advice which he received from all sides. The Grand Duke remained absolutely indifferent to praise as well as to blame, and without lamenting over spilt milk or over the injustice of a fate which, perhaps, in his conscience, he knew he had not entirely deserved, he resolutely ordered a retreat for which later events justified him, but which at first sight appeared one gigantic mistake.

Even Nicholas Nicholaievitch's worst enemies were obliged to own that, once it had been entered upon, this retreat was performed in a masterly manner. No efforts of the German armies were able to break or to interfere with the execution of this manœuvre. The soldiers did not like it, which perhaps was salutary for them, because their demoralised spirit got excited under its apparent shame, and they swore that, if only the opportunity were granted to them, they would wipe out its memory, and in their turn rout their formidable enemy. They thought it hard to abandon towns and fortresses which they had defended for so many months, and without contesting every step of Germany's march forward through Russian territory. The remembrance of 1812, when a similar thing had occurred, was not powerful enough to do away with this feeling of self-humiliation which moved the army. They wondered whether such an absolute surrender could be justified. Murmurs arose and reached the Grand Duke, but they did not induce him to depart from his course of action. He knew that the only hope left was to prevent the occurrence of a Russian Sedan. In the absence of ammunition and material it was far better to leave the Germans a free field than to run such a risk.

To give an idea of the scarcity of ammunition it will be sufficient to state that in some places, where the Prussian pressure was the most intense, each soldier was given out only seven cartridges, and told to use them sparingly. Bayonet fights became the rule, and our men had some-

times to lie for days in their trenches without any means of replying to the murderous fire that was being poured upon them from their enemy's heavy guns. In spite of the desperate situation, not one Russian soldier ever thought of complaining, or of surrendering until absolutely forced to do so. During all this trying time the conduct of the Russian soldier remained absolutely heroic, and deserves to go down as such to posterity in any authoritative history of the war.

For a long time General Ivanov hoped he would be able to hold the line of Grodek, in Galicia, and stop von Mackensen's march forward, but at last he had to succumb to the number of the troops which attacked the Russian defences of the Dniester. He tried at least to cover his retreat as far as he could, and not to expose his army to a rear attack while retiring to its new lines of defence on the other side of the Vistula. He had been promised ammunition in sufficient quantity to be able to organise a strong resistance in this region, so he proceeded to evacuate Lemberg and the country around it, whilst a numerous detachment was told to hold up the enemy in the region of Rawa Ruska, Zolkiew, and further down on the east of the Galician capital. Later on he had to withstand an attack from the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, on the banks of Gnila-Lipa River, where some of the most bloody encounters of the Galician campaign took place; and though it became impossible for us to hold our positions against overwhelming forces, yet it is certain that the delay which our resistance occasioned to the enemy in his advance saved the garrison of Warsaw, and allowed the evacuation to be effected in complete order, not to mention the removal of all that it contained in the way of military stores and provisions.

All this, of course, was not known among the public, who only saw the great fact of a general retreat. In Petrograd the excitement assumed such proportions that the

military authorities deemed it necessary to issue proclamations to the population, in which the latter was warned not to attach undue importance to the alarmist rumours current. In this appeal to the good sense of the inhabitants of the capital they declared that the news published officially by the General Staff was absolutely reliable, that no fatal catastrophe could occur, so far as it was possible for human eyes to foresee, but that some time must necessarily elapse before the Russian armies could once more assume the offensive, in view of the terrible losses they had suffered—losses which had been far heavier than those of any of their Allies. This proclamation, whilst it did not allay the fears which had seized hold of Petrograd, nevertheless inspired confidence for the future, and people began once more to speak about the possibility of stopping the progress of the German troops. The one fact which occasioned the most anxiety, however, was the enemy's advance in the region of Riga, as well as over the whole of Courland. Its population was known to have strong German sympathies—a fact that contributed to the general anxiety as to this phase of the campaign. This anxiety was not shared by the Staff, who for some reason never believed in the possibility of Riga falling into the Kaiser's hands.

With Poland this was quite different. It had to be sacrificed, hard as the thing appeared, especially in view of the generous intentions of the Tsar in regard to his Polish subjects, which he had allowed to be published at the beginning of the war. For something like one year one had hoped with certainty to be able to drive the Germans out of sight of the walls of Warsaw, and indeed their efforts to take the town had been baffled already on two occasions. This time, however, they were to be more successful, because it had to be admitted that, without sufficient ammunition, there was no possibility of holding it, or to offer resistance to the forces of a stronger and better equipped adversary.

This want of ammunition has been the great cause of our failure in the earlier stages of the war—a culpable negligence of the War Office in this direction. No one there had been prepared for a campaign of such long duration, and owing to the indolence which is so distinctive of the Slav nature, no one had ever given a thought to the necessity of being provided for prolonged fighting. None of the factories for munitions had been properly worked, and the production was much below what the government expected. Disorder was found almost everywhere—want of cohesion and method, besides carelessness in work. Means of transport was also either defective or absent, and, to add to it all, people seemed to have lost their heads.

The Germans were perfectly well aware of all these flaws in the vast machine of the Russian military and civil organisation. They meant to strike a decisive blow at the might of Russia before she had time to rally from the first surprise of a series of unexpected reverses that would have been more than sufficient to discourage anybody not possessed with that confidence in their own strength which has always distinguished the Russian nation. They fully believed that after the fall of Warsaw, and the line of fortresses extending from Ivangorod to Brest Litowsk, they would be able, without resistance, to march on Petrograd, where they would dictate peace on their terms before the advent of the next winter. These hopes were doomed, because not only did the passage through Galicia into Poland prove much longer and much more difficult than they had counted upon, but the obstacles to their march were also greater than their spies had been led to believe. The Russians' retreat was performed as slowly as possible, but for all that it did not give their enemies a single chance to engage them in a decisive battle, which might have decided the whole fate of the campaign. Looked upon from that point of view the retreat was

indeed a wonderful performance, and certainly stands to the credit of the Grand Duke Nicholas and his generals.

The Germans, however, at this stage of the campaign had unlimited faith in their ability to bring hostilities to a victorious and prompt issue. The threat of destroying everything behind them which the Russian generals declared they were ordered to do did not affect them seriously, and they were more disposed to laugh at it than anything else. Followed as they were by detachments of sappers and engineers who repaired the damaged railway lines as they went along, they did not fear famine, owing to their ability to send the necessary provisions to meet the daily wants of their armies. They reckoned, moreover, on finding considerable sympathy in Poland, where they had been told that violent anti-Russian feelings existed. In this they were misled; their march in Poland was not at all triumphant; they discovered that, far from being received as saviours, they were considered to be usurpers, and treated accordingly.

The encircling movement with which the Germans advanced on Warsaw was an exceptionally brilliant one. At one time it was believed in Petrograd that General von Mackensen, in conjunction with the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, meant to surround the Russian army, and bring it to battle between the Vistula and the Bug. But this turned out to be an erroneous idea, and, looking back on what took place at this stage of the campaign, it seems that neither of the two adversaries really cared for an encounter; each preferred to husband his strength for a future and far more important struggle elsewhere than in the Polish plains.

The originator of the grandiose plan of seizing the capital of Poland, simultaneously with an offensive march forward through Courland toward Riga and Petrograd, was von Hindenburg, and it was executed according to his instructions with decided ability. The Germans

advanced in close column toward Warsaw and the fortresses which defended it, Ivangorod and Novo Georgiewsk. For some time Ossowetz had been in a state of siege, and had defended itself the whole time with uncommon energy and determination. In the case of other Russian strongholds, only after every available means of defence had been used, all resources exhausted, and the position had assumed an untenable aspect, had they surrendered. But at Novo Georgiewsk and Kovno—the commanders of which were ultimately court-martialled, and sentenced to heavy penalties—it had been thought better to spare the lives of the garrisons rather than expose them to certain death. From a military point of view their conduct was of course indefensible, and they had to suffer accordingly, but it is to be doubted whether any further lengthening of an almost hopeless resistance would have improved the tragic outlook.

What rendered the defence of Warsaw unusually difficult was the enormous forces concentrated by the Germans on the Narew front, which guarded the main line of the Petrograd railway. This decided the fate of the unfortunate city, which the Russians proceeded to evacuate, withdrawing from it not only the garrison, but also the civil administrations, hospitals, post and telegraph offices. The banks had left some time before, the Treasury too. The post office closed its doors on July 25th, after which the town was cut off from all communications with the outside world, and had to rely for news on such as was brought from the outposts, where the march of the German armies was watched with great attention.

During the night of the 1st and 2nd of August the invading troops of the Kaiser crossed the Vistula on two pontoon bridges, in the vicinity of Maciejowice, a small village outside Warsaw, and within a few days they had four divisions on the other side of the river, forcing the Russians to retire toward Garwolin. The celebrated

phalanx of von Mackensen was obliged in one place to yield ground to our troops, who, however, could not hold what they had won, and obeying the orders they had received from Headquarters, withdrew toward Brest Litowsk. At last, on the 4th of August, 1915, the world was informed that the army commanded by Prince Leopold of Bavaria had entered Warsaw, and on that same day the mighty fortress of Ivangorod had fallen into German hands.

The impression produced throughout Russia by the news of this double disaster is indescribable; every Russian citizen resented it as a personal affront. But the blow was borne with quiet dignity deserving of the greatest admiration. The Press behaved in a similar manner. In a leader on the subject, the *Retsch*, the organ of the Liberal party, wrote:

"The news of the fall of Warsaw is anything but a surprise. Already well-informed people knew that the strategical difficulties required from us this heavy sacrifice, and in the last few days the fact came to the knowledge of the general public; nevertheless, the news that this event has at last taken place has produced a deep impression everywhere, and will cause intense pain to every right-minded patriot. Who can remain indifferent to the serious trials which our beloved Fatherland is undergoing at the present moment?

"But bitter as our feelings are, and in spite of the fact that we were prepared for the surrender of Warsaw, we still have no fear as to the ultimate result of the struggle. The more successes our enemy obtains over us, the clearer it becomes that there can be but one end to this terrible, to this awful war, and that is a final and definite victory over Germany, who has proved herself to be a menace and a danger to the whole of the civilised world.

"For the third time since the beginning of the cam-

paign the Germans have attacked Warsaw. Twice our heroic soldiers have obliged them to withdraw. This time they used the advantages which their material superiority in ammunition and armaments gave to them, and it would have been sheer madness, in view of our inferiority in these respects, to have exposed our troops to merciless fire. So long as our armies remain intact and full of courage, we can afford to look with calmness toward the future. It only depends on ourselves to put an end to the inferiority of our armaments. We ought, therefore, to work persistently in that direction to repair our mistakes and our defects, and to give to our brave defenders and to our whole army ammunition in sufficient quantity to allow it to maintain its former reputation, and all the renown for bravery which it has already earned—and deserves.

"The fall of Warsaw ought only to strengthen our resolution to prove to the world that we know where our duty lies, and that we mean to perform it without flinching."

The occupation of the town, in spite of the pompous assertions of the German Press, took place in an atmosphere of terror on the part of the population. It knew that it had got to submit, and that, in order to escape heavy fines and general discomfort, it had better take quietly the misfortune that had fallen upon it. Vague fears about being treated in the same way as Louvain and other Belgian towns pervaded unfortunate Warsaw. The inhabitants were completely terrorised by the sight of the German helmets, and with the exception of a few excitable spirits in sympathy with Prussian ways, they looked forward with the utmost anxiety toward a future which they all dreaded, but from which they could not escape.

When the first detachment of Bavarian soldiers entered the Polish capital they were received in absolute silence, and with a certain amount of curiosity. One wondered

what was going to happen next. To the general surprise, the conquerors began at once organising themselves as if they were in their own country, and tried to restore the town to some of its former animation and activity. They opened the theatres, cafés, and restaurants, and during these first days were most lenient toward the Poles. Prince Leopold of Bavaria made a solemn entry into the streets of Warsaw, and held a review in front of the Orthodox Cathedral, much to the disgust of the few Russians left in the town. But though troops kept pouring into it, they did not make a lengthened stay, merely passing through on their way toward the battle region on the Vistula.

The Russian army tried for a few days to keep Praga, the suburb facing Warsaw on the other side of the Vistula. Our rearguard made a desperate resistance, and shelled the old castle of the Polish kings, which is one of the curiosities of their former capital. The aim was to gain time for the main forces to retire without being cut up. The Germans allowed them to do so with what seemed an amazing indifference. The chief endeavour of the enemy was to isolate the fortress of Novo Georgiewsk, which, after Ivangorod, was the most important stronghold on the Vistula, and defended the whole country around. It was supposed to be full of ammunition and war material, which the Russians, in their retreat, had not been able to take away with them or to destroy, and the Kaiser had, from the first, said that its possession was indispensable to the firm establishment of his troops in Poland. The garrison defended itself desperately, but had at last to capitulate, owing to the weakness of its commander, whose feelings of humanity made him forget his military obligations. Before the surrender a detachment of officers belonging to the flying corps undertook to carry the colours of different regiments quartered in the fortress, together with all the documents, plans, and money still left, to the Russian Headquarters. They started one dark night

with their precious burden, succeeded in escaping the vigilance of the Prussian sentinels, and made their way through the clouds toward their destination, which they reached safely. The next day the Germans entered the citadel, masters of one of our most important points of defence in the whole region.

Before even the enemy occupied Novo Georgiewsk he had continued his movement forward in Lithuania, and had attacked Kovno with fury. Apart from its great strategical importance, Kovno was the key to the road toward Petrograd, and also an important railway junction on the line leading from the East Prussian frontier toward the Russian capital. Moreover, it barred the way to the Niemen, the possession of which would have been most advantageous to the invaders. Who wonders, therefore, that they made up their minds to capture the place with all speed? They turned against it all the heavy siege artillery which they had brought over from Königsberg for the purpose. It was thought for a moment in Petrograd that we would attempt to defend the fortress at all costs; and, indeed, rumour had it that orders to do so had been issued by the Tsar himself, who could not reconcile himself to this abandonment of every point where the advance of the German troops could have been stayed, even if only for a short time. But the Grand Duke either did not believe that this could be done, or else was influenced by the Chief of his Staff, who was one of his great favourites, General Januschkievitch, and, in spite of the instructions which were issued from Tsarskoye Selo, adhered to his original plan of abandoning the whole country to the enemy, who was simply sweeping everything before him. Nicholas Nicholaievitch refused to send reinforcements to Kovno. On the contrary, he withdrew the troops which we had there, leaving the smallest possible garrison in the town, and hurried the retreating movement of his armies towards Brest Litowsk and the Pinsk marshes.

It is stated that this decision was one of the causes of his ultimate removal to the Caucasus.

This settled the fate of unfortunate Kovno, which fell on the 17th of August, just thirteen days after Warsaw. On the 19th Novo Georgiewsk was captured, and on the 24th the stronghold of Ossowetz, which for nearly ten months had withstood the German attacks, succumbed at last. The phalanx of von Mackensen had swept everything before it, and could start with renewed vigour on the road leading to Brest Litowsk, the most important of all the Russian fortresses that had been erected to defend the country against a German invasion—the calamity which had overtaken it in spite of all precautions.

CHAPTER XII.

Fall of Kovno.

The loss of Kovno, strange as it may appear, produced in Petrograd a far deeper impression than the fall of Warsaw. Important as the latter undoubtedly was from the political point of view, it lay far more within the limits of probability to see the Polish capital taken by the enemy, who, ever since the beginning of the war, had lain almost at its doors, than to admit the possibility of one of the greatest and strongest Russian fortresses being stormed by the German troops. Besides, Kovno was in Russia, and its possession by the Kaiser meant a good deal more to every Russian patriot than any Polish territory. Apart from sentimental reasons, Kovno represented an immense quantity of war material, guns, ammunition, and provisions of every kind, which had accumulated within its walls from the beginning of the campaign. It was bitter to see all this captured, and even more so to find that we had not been given a chance to defend it. The evacuation of the fortress began late in June, when, by order of the Grand Duke, a certain quantity of guns had been withdrawn. In July some of the advance forts which defended the entrance to the stronghold had fallen into the hands of the Germans, but it was only on the 6th of August that a serious attack was started, and on the 8th heavy siege artillery opened a murderous fire against our positions. Eight forts in succession were stormed between that date and the 15th of August, and the cannonade surpassed in intensity anything ever experienced before. The firing

was heard farther than Vilna, and carried terror into the hearts of the unfortunate inhabitants of the country surrounding the besieged town. On the 16th of August the German infantry had been able to advance as far as the line of the permanent fortifications which defended the immediate approach to the fortress, taking by assault trenches and positions which, when not held by a small number of men—many of them wounded,—were already abandoned. The whole day of the 17th of August passed in one attack on the eastern side of the Niemen; the bridge was destroyed by German shells, the forts on the north flank were burned down, and in the evening the entire southern side fell into the hands of the enemy. The town itself, with its last line of fortifications, then had to capitulate, together with the 20,000 men still left of its once strong garrison.

It was this capitulation which was so bitterly resented by Russian society. It produced a disastrous impression in Petrograd, and shook the last remnants of the Grand Duke's former popularity. A letter received from the Russian capital, which bore the date August 20th, expressed itself in the following terms upon this subject:

"I do not know what impression the fall of Kovno may have produced abroad. Here the consternation surpasses everything I have ever seen before, and even after the disasters of Mukden and Tsu Shima, at the time of the Japanese war, there was not such a general depression as now pervades the whole atmosphere of Petrograd. The pessimists, who prophesied that no good could ever result from the Grand Duke being in supreme military command, rejoice to see their prognostications verified, but even they forbear from indulging in the usual 'I told you so' dear to the human heart. The situation is felt to be far too serious for vain boasting. The one thing which dominates is the knowledge that not only we have

been beaten, but also that we did not defend ourselves as we ought to have done. It is most difficult to persuade a whole nation as bitterly disappointed as Russia has been that strategical reasons require us to retire and avoid the chance of an encounter face to face with our enemy. One must be a soldier to judge of such things, and laymen can only feel the disgrace of this surrender of our positions. One cannot understand how it happens that our army, which, according to what we have been told, was plentifully supplied with all that it required, found itself suddenly without the means of defence. The nation does not differentiate between a retreat executed in perfect order, as ours has been, and a flight. It easily mistakes the one for the other, and its intelligence fails to grasp how it comes about that, after we have been assured all along that our territory was secured against any invasion of the enemy by a line of fortresses so strong that no army in the world could possibly take them, this line, the erection of which had cost so much money, was suddenly pronounced to be worth nothing at all—to constitute, indeed, a danger for our troops had they remained. The impression that lies have been told is possessing the mind of the public, which begins to say definitely that somebody has been guilty of systematic deceit. It is a thousand pities, because once the confidence of the nation in its leaders is shaken it will not respond with the one-time readiness to future appeals to its spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion. The great danger of such a frame of mind is too serious not to engross the attention of all those who look farther than the present day.

"It is now that the mistake made from the very beginning of confiding the supreme command to a member of the Imperial Family becomes apparent in all its nakedness. It would have been easy to punish any Commander-in-Chief of lesser birth, but with a Grand Duke this could not be thought of. A certain portion of Petrograd society

is clamouring for the dismissal of the Grand Duke Nicholas, and curious stories are related concerning his growing unpopularity among the army, his tyrannical character and general recklessness; but either these stories do not reach Tsarskoye Selo, or the Sovereign is afraid of deposing a relative quite capable of resisting his authority. This at least is what one hears from all sides, though, personally, I do not believe any of these stories. Ruthless as the Grand Duke may be, he would not dream of opposing the Emperor or failing in the performance of any Royal command. I am satisfied that the story of his refusal to defend Kovno has been invented by busybodies anxious to appear to know everything. The retreat was a necessity in consequence of the lack of ammunition. Had we stopped to meet the Prussians and their big guns, we should simply have sacrificed the bulk of our army to no purpose. Besides, the conditions of modern warfare have quite done away with the old tradition of strong fortresses. It is too little realised that not one of them can resist the murderous fire of the fat and lean Berthas with which the Prussians are provided. And so mankind is bound to be impressed by events of such magnitude as the loss of Ivangorod and of Kovno, which most probably will be followed by the fall of the other fortresses on the Vistula and beyond it. In military circles they are quite convinced that Brest Litowsk, too, will fall, after which arises the question whether the Germans will be able to cope with the difficulty of the Pinsk Marshes and to cross that most dangerous region. My private opinion is that they will not succeed in this part of their devilish programme. It is August already, and in another three weeks the autumn rains will start, which, even in the best of cases, must considerably delay them, and turn their attention to their winter quarters in preference to everything else.

"I also fail to see the reason for the panic which seems to have got hold of the population of Petrograd; in these

days of aircraft and railways one is apt to forget the distances which make our country such a wonderful place. It is easy for newspaper reporters to say that within a few days the enemy will be at the gates of our capital. In reality such a thing is out of the range of human possibility if we take into account the difficulty of moving a whole army, with its baggage and artillery, in an unknown country, where the roads are full of obstacles of a nature this enemy does not even suspect. Certainly the situation is serious, but not desperate. The Germans are far from having won the war, which will turn out to be a question of patience and endurance. Strong as they are, their number will diminish sooner than that of the Allies, and this day twelve months we shall see whether they stand as well as they do at the present moment. If only we remain quiet in regard to matters of home politics, I quite believe that we shall teach the Germans a lesson they will be compelled to take to heart, whether they wish it or not."

My correspondent saw perhaps clearer than most people the unfortunate turn which the campaign had taken during that summer of 1915. If one had been assured that ammunition would be forthcoming in the near future, one might have looked at things with more equanimity. Unfortunately, such was far from being the case. On the contrary, one dreaded that, despite the promises of the government, the indifference of officials would allow the important matter of the armaments to remain in a condition of shocking and culpable neglect. People clamoured for the day when the Duma would meet again, and all kinds of things were foreseen in connection with that impending event. Rumours of a revolution went about, which were further strengthened by unrestrained gossip.

On the 21st of August the railway line of Wlodawa-Brest Litowsk was in the hands of the Germans, who began

with their usual thoroughness to mass their armies around Brest Litowsk, the most important point of defence upon which the Grand Duke had reckoned in his continual retreat. It must not be forgotten, when reviewing the events of that memorable month of August, 1915, that the principal aim of the German Staff was to cut the communications between the different Russian armies, especially of the groups which were still gathered about the Niemen, and which constituted, even without sufficient ammunition, a formidable source of danger to the enemy, who advanced toward Vilna as hurriedly as circumstances allowed, hoping to enter this town even before they had captured Brest Litowsk, and thus cut off our troops from their base. But all their efforts to surround us, or to oblige us to accept the battle which they hoped would end in our defeat, were useless. The Grand Duke began to reproach himself for not having insisted that he must have ammunition enough to cope with the enterprising adversary. With great courage he accepted blame which was not his alone, and determined to save the army at all costs. A retreat, painful though it might be, would not rob the troops of their courage and affect their morale in a dangerous manner, as would a lost battle. No matter at what cost, the army had to be saved. This point established, the Grand Duke acted in accordance with it, and so, in spite of a storm of indignation, and even of ridicule, he brought the Russian army beyond the reach of the German artillery, there to entrench and prepare itself for the day when once more it would take the offensive.

The Austrians, who were sent forward to attack the advance works of the fortification that guarded the entrance to Brest Litowsk, were commanded nominally by their own officers, in reality by Germans. They started a desperate assault during the early hours of the 25th of August against the line of forts which stretched from the village of Wyssokie

Litowsk, where stood the splendid castle of the Countess Potocka, up to the town of Brest itself. For a whole day they fought without intermission, and thousands of men perished in trenches that had to be carried with the bayonet. The Russians retired towards the Bug, defending their ground inch by inch, burning the town, blowing up the railway station, the post office (buildings that might prove of some utility to the enemy), and the barracks which had been occupied by their troops. After nearly twenty-four hours of uninterrupted struggle, and as the last line of fortifications was about to be stormed, the Prussians, who up to that time had remained passive spectators of the battle which had been raging, sent one of their reserve corps to the assistance of the Austrians, and it was this corps which was the first to enter the still burning ruins of what had once been the flourishing town of Brest Litowsk. The railway line had already been occupied by the Germans a few days, and they started at once to repair it, so as to assure their line of communication with Warsaw and with Eastern Prussia in the north and west, and with Kowal in the south.

In spite of their clamorous joy at this new success, it remains to be proved whether later on it would have been of real advantage to them. The whole population of Brest, which was mostly Jewish, did not take kindly to the invaders, or to the new regulations which the latter introduced into the happy-go-lucky Lithuanian town. In Warsaw they had received some sympathy of a kind, but in Brest it was different. First of all, most of the inhabitants had fled, and those who remained were utterly ruined, and could not be of much use to their conquerors. Provisions also were lacking. The factories were devoid of machinery, and the whole place presented an aspect of desolation. The Germans were in possession of the fortress which they had coveted for such a long time; they found nothing but ruin. This is the plain and unvarnished truth.

The great successes of the Prussians were only obtained because they met with absolutely no resistance. Had the Russians possessed as much ammunition as their enemies, it is a question whether the Germans could have advanced into the interior of Poland and Lithuania as easily as they did. This was a fact to which they were very careful not to draw the attention of the world. On the contrary, they hastened to issue a notice which they hoped would excite German enthusiasm, so as to prepare the nation for the further sacrifices which its government perfectly well knew it would have to ask from it within a very short time. This notice is so typical of German lies that it deserves to be reproduced here, if only to point out the numerous inaccuracies with which it abounds :

"The strength of the Russian armies which opposed us," begins this extraordinary official communiqué, "cannot be estimated as less than 1,400,000 men. Of this number 1,100,000 have fallen into our hands and are prisoners, whilst *at least* 300,000 men have been killed or are completely disabled. Probably the numbers *are even higher* than stated, if we take into account that, in order to save what was left of their artillery, the Russians covered the retreat of the latter with their infantry, which must, in consequence, have suffered enormously.

"We can therefore assume with absolute certainty that once for all our enemy has been entirely annihilated, and if he can still bring into the field some troops to oppose us, this can only be explained by the fact that a few divisions were left in the south of Russia, against the possibility of an attack from Turkey. But these are composed of only half-trained men, gathered together from all parts of Russia, who are absolutely incapable of holding the field against us. We have driven our enemy out of Galicia, Poland, Courland, and Lithuania ; we have broken through his lines, and no fewer than twelve fortresses, of which

four are large and modern, have been captured by us; with them has fallen the last line of defence which Russia possessed against us."

It is amusing to enter into the details of this document, and to ask those who had composed it how they could explain the fact that, according to their own account, they had killed and taken prisoners more men than the number which they had indicated themselves as having opposed them. Among the many wonderful things which the Germans have performed, this is surely one of the most remarkable achievements.

We would also ask the Germans how it happened that this destroyed Russian army revived suddenly from the dead, and succeeded in preventing the famous Marshal von Hindenburg himself from taking Riga, which he had declared he could capture whenever he liked. Why, too, was the important fortress of Dunaburg—or Dwinsk, to give it its Russian name—at Christmas, 1915, still in possession of the Tsar, in spite of the repeated assurances of the German military authorities that its capture was but a matter of a few hours. The Prussian Staff is no longer so eager to talk to us about the annihilation of the Russian armies as it was in August, 1915.

It was fondly expected at Berlin, and among the native German population, that the capture of Brest Litowsk would open the way to Southern Russia, and that Kiev would be the next town to fall into the hands of von Mackensen and of Prince Leopold of Bavaria, who suddenly had been entrusted with the leadership of the German vanguard. In reality the conquest of the old Lithuanian town had no such results, and proved rather a source of embarrassment than anything else to the further successes of the Kaiser's soldiers. It must not be forgotten that the aim of the Germans was to strike terror into the hearts of their adversaries, and that a good deal of their

triumphs lay in the rapidity of their march forward. To capture Petrograd, Kiev, Odessa, the territories surrounding the Black Sea, the Germans would have to be very much more advanced before the winter interfered with further progress. And winter, or rather autumn with its rains, was almost at hand. As far as Brest Litowsk the road had been relatively easy to follow, owing to the absence of serious resistance on the part of the Russians; but after Brest matters would prove very different, because this town lies on the confines of the Pripet Marshes—far more formidable enemies than an army of soldiers would be. The marshes form the middle of the great triangular tract of woodland which has its apex at Brest Litowsk itself, and which is based on the middle course of the Dnieper, between Mohileff and Kiev. The Pripet River rises between Wlodawa and Kowal, in Volhynia, and flows into the Dnieper above Kiev after a winding course of something like 450 miles, and it is this river which forms the main artery of an intricate system of narrow and muddy streams which give to the whole region a most peculiar character, such, for instance, as the Styr—which is defended by the fortress of Luck—the Stochad and the Touriya. These streams have led to the formation of vast swamps which, together with the wooded condition of the region, make it a most extraordinary patch of country, in which it is next to impossible for anyone not a native to pick his way. At all seasons it is difficult of access, and in many parts practically impassable in autumn or in spring, when the floods cause the rivers to overflow to as much as ten miles across. Pinsk, where the Pripet becomes navigable, is the largest town in the region, though but a small and poor one. It has, however, four main strategic railway lines which run from west to east, and one running from north to south. Of these the Germans seized two, but even this did not profit them much, because the swamps would not allow them to proceed with anything like the

necessary rapidity, which had proved such an advantage in their march from Warsaw to Brest Litowsk. In fact, they never even attempted to overcome the obstacles which nature itself had put in their way, and after the capture of Brest they did not make the slightest effort to follow up their first successes by capturing Kiev. They concentrated their whole attention on Vilna, which they ultimately took before the autumn had settled upon the region.

What seemed at first sight rather wonderful was the fact that von Mackensen, who had led the Prussian advance towards Lithuania, suddenly disappeared from the scene, and was no longer heard of, save for the fact that he was supposed to be somewhere in Volhynia. Events proved, later on, that whilst he had been believed to remain inactive, he had, on the contrary, moved with the greatest secrecy toward the Serbian frontier, where he was to join Ferdinand of Coburg, whose treachery at that time was still unsuspected. The chief attention of the Russian Staff, at this period of the war, was concentrated on the northern region, as some people seemed to fear that the main object of the Prussian effort was directed against Courland, Riga, and Petrograd, though no serious person gave the slightest consideration to an advance on Petrograd, so impossible did it seem. On the contrary, the capture of Riga might have been effected at that moment, and it is still an object of surprise that Marshal von Hindenburg did not make the attempt, because its fall was considered to be merely a question of days. The command over the Russian northern armies had been entrusted to General Roussky, the ablest general that Russia had been able to put into the field. He had stormed Galicia, and taken its capital, Lemberg, by a short and unexpected attack. People seemed to believe that some surprise was in store for us in Courland, and the apprehension that such might be the case was so strong that one ceased to

think much about events in Lithuania, where the Kaiser's troops were still winning one success after another. Vilna was taken, and the capture of this old town, the former capital of Lithuania, made an important base for the Prussians, besides giving them the command of perhaps the most important railway line in Russia. Then Grodno fell, and the whole line of fortresses destined to protect Russia against a foreign invasion, with the sole exception of Dwinsk, was thus in possession of the enemy. It was certainly a great success, but it was not one of the decisive victories which decide the fate of a campaign. In spite of the boastings of the German General Staff, it had not been able to add to its record of glorious military deeds any victory like the surrender of Sedan or Metz. The Allies, not excepting the Russians, had proved to be of much tougher stuff than had been suspected, and at the very moment when the Kaiser and his satellites were boasting of their triumphs the tide was turning, and the whole campaign was to undergo a complete change which was not to be altogether to the advantage of arrogant Prussia.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Tsar Takes Command.

In Petrograd, the news of the German advance, which at first had considerably frightened the timorous part of the population, began to be viewed with more equanimity, after the discovery that it seemed to have come to a standstill after the occupation of Brest Litowsk. The fact also that the threatened attack on Riga seemed for the moment to have been abandoned helped to raise the courage of those who had already prophesied all kinds of worse misfortunes than those which had overtaken us. Public attention appeared entirely concentrated on the debates of the Duma, which had met in conditions of such gravity that every word uttered within its walls was bound to have a great influence on the whole country. The different parties, though showing intense patriotism, did not forbear from expressing their opinion concerning the conduct of the government in terms which could not leave any doubt as to the feelings with which it was viewed in the country.

In a later chapter I shall return to the details of the discussions which took place in the Legislative Assembly—discussions that at last grew so sharp that the Assembly had to be prorogued by the Sovereign, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, M. Gorémykin. At present I must still go on with the tale of the German advance into the interior of Russia, and of the consequences that resulted from it. After the capture of Brest the Prussians turned their attention to Grodno, which also succumbed within

a few days. Vilna, being an open town, presented absolutely no obstacle to the enemy, and was a considerable advantage strategically, owing to its command of the railway which linked the communications of all Western Russia with the capital. The town was, moreover, rich, and though the Russians, in evacuating it, had carried away with them all they could, even the church bells, the conquerors found, nevertheless, considerable booty. Vilna, as we have said, constituted for them an excellent base, and they were not slow to avail themselves of it. The Prussians' first care was to organise the town after their own fashion, to introduce Prussian ways, and to appoint a military governor responsible to his superiors. The garrison which was left in this ancient capital of Lithuania was also stronger than the one which the Germans generally stationed in their conquered cities. They felt that, in a place where, in spite of the large proportion of Poles and Jews, the population was not at all friendly towards them, it would not do to expose themselves to any surprise, whether from outside or in the place itself, and so they applied themselves to win the friendship of the inhabitants of the town as well as of its surroundings. The people were not oppressed, the Germans paid for what they requisitioned, and treated with courtesy the landowners of the numerous properties which abounded in the neighbourhood, and which they refrained from destroying, save in cases where it appeared advisable to do so. Vilna afforded them an excellent point of observation, owing to its communications with the rest of the Russian Empire.

Even after Vilna fell some of the remaining population kept in touch with the army of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Of this the German Staff was perfectly aware. The reign of terror which the Prussians had established in Belgium was spared to the Russian provinces, perhaps because the Germans never meant to retain them in their hands,

and perhaps also because they realised the danger that barbarous treatment might result in their not being able to obtain anything in the way of provisions. The Russian military authorities obliged the populations of the provinces which they evacuated to fly before the enemy, and to destroy everything they could not take away with them. This policy, which was but an imitation of what had taken place in 1812, was no longer appropriate to the needs of the moment, and was only an added burden. The idea was to embarrass the Prussians, but it proved a mistake. Their railway service was mechanically excellent, and as they progressed they were followed by their commissariat, which supplied everything for the maintenance of the enormous number of men as they proceeded on their way. On the other hand, the refugees were compelled to abandon all that they had possessed in the way of worldly goods. These two factors brought about such misery in Russia as will take very many years—perhaps a century—to heal. The destitution entailed an expense of which it is impossible at present to estimate the extent. The enormous sums which were expended by public as well as by private charity seemed to be but a drop in the vast ocean of suffering caused by the exodus of a whole nation. The money thus scattered with a generosity to which no parallel can be found in the history of Russia might have been better employed, because, finally, it was its own citizens, and not the Germans, that the Russian government was punishing and condemning to want and poverty by forcing them to follow the retreating army on its march. The destruction surpassed description, and one cannot help questioning what was the use of it. We can understand that everything of possible value to the enemy should be removed, but one fails to grasp the reason for this wholesale burning of entire villages, where a peaceful population had been living for hundreds of years.

This imposed migration added to the panic that had seized hold of the Russian nation. The refugees, as they dragged themselves along that road which was leading them towards a Calvary they could not even see from afar, carried with them tales of horror, amplified by the imagination, which were meant to terrify the people into whose ears they were poured. When the ignorant Russian peasants of these central provinces, out of the reach of the enemy, saw their own firesides invaded by motley compatriots, whose distress was pitiful in the extreme, they fully believed that the end of Russia had come.

The effect of this panic was felt in Petrograd, and a good many of the reproaches levelled at the Grand Duke Nicholas proceeded from the masses, believing it was all due to his mistakes. The vigorous agitation started against him after the fall of Kovno grew in intensity after the fall of Grodno and Vilna. During a private meeting of the Progressive party that took place in the capital, on the eve of the assembling of the Duma, a member, when speaking about the difficulties of the situation, parodied the famous words of the Roman Emperor, and, in pathetic but pointed tones, addressed the Commander-in-Chief, "Varus, where are our legions?"—a question which, by the way, was not at all exact, because the legions were there, and though he had lost our fortresses, Nicholas Nicholaievitch had at least succeeded in saving our armies. But this service which he had rendered his Fatherland was passed by. In their rage the public was only too glad to find a scapegoat.

The Grand Duke bore himself with remarkable dignity all through this trying time, and he did an almost unprecedented thing in Russia: he absolved his subordinates from blame, not allowing them to suffer for his own errors. History will judge him certainly with more leniency than his contemporaries have done.

In Petrograd a considerable party was working against

him, on which topic the correspondent whose letters I have already quoted wrote to me:

"A curious characteristic of the frame of mind in which the majority of influential persons in the capital find themselves just now is the indifference displayed in regard to the fate of unfortunate Lithuania. Following the terrible outcry which was raised after the fall of Kovno, one would have expected to see the indignation of the public rise to an unheard-of pitch when Grodno and Vilna were taken from us. But nothing of the kind occurred. People simply shrugged their shoulders, and expressed their regret at the thought that we would be compelled to fight to take back what has been wrested from us; but the idea that this taking back may present some considerable difficulty does not seem to trouble them.

"All the talk one hears in Petrograd concerns the regrettable want of ammunition, the newly discovered abuses in the War Office, especially in the Commissariat Department, and the incapacity of the Staff. One is so eager to pour invectives on the heads of the Grand Duke and of his immediate subordinates, that one loses sight of the principal features of a situation which is anything but pleasant, and considerably dangerous. One is well aware of the amount of unnecessary talk in which Petrograd likes to indulge at all times; one does not wonder therefore that on the present occasion neither words nor reproaches are spared. Of course, we were not prepared for war, but the question arises whether we would ever have been prepared under the existing system of commissions, entrusted apparently with the task of watching over the expenses of national defence, but in reality doing little else but filling their pockets. In the good old times of Milioutine it was the War Minister alone who had in his charge all the expenditure of his department. At present his hands are tied, and not one button can be

bought until the Commission which has the control of the funds has approved of the purchase. All the members of this famous Commission with but few exceptions are open to the persuasions of what in Turkey one calls 'baksheesh,' and in our enlightened Russia, 'Na Tchay.' They see no wrong in receiving handsome cheques from the different firms to whom they give orders, or whose offers of service they accept; it is indeed to their interest to drag on the war. As a result the firms who would have conscientiously delivered ammunition were set aside, and large sums on account of future orders were handed over to others that were not so entirely conscientious.

"The result of this state of things is apparent, but it is the system that is the cause of it, not this or that individual. General Soukhomlinov has been accused of all kinds of horrors, and suspicion has even hovered around the name of the Grand Duke, and yet neither the one nor the other could have done anything at the eleventh hour to bring our armaments up to date when the enemy had already declared war upon us. Certainly the War Minister ought to have known better than to think that we were ready for the struggle, and he ought not to have trusted so entirely to others; but we must not forget that everybody believed that Germany would be crushed in six weeks, and that we would be in Berlin awaiting the advent of our French Allies. This initial and capital mistake was at the root of the whole trouble, and the Press is also seriously to blame by its absolute trust in the perfection of our military preparations. Soukhomlinov may have been foolishly led into error, but most certainly he has never been dishonest; he retires from office not richer and perhaps even poorer than when he entered it. On the other hand, it is undeniable that he has displayed far too much weakness and leniency toward his subordinates. He is by nature a kind-hearted man, and he has shown it to a degree that was almost criminal;

he ought to have looked into things far more carefully. On the other hand, the army under his guidance is certainly far more efficient than it was at the time of the Japanese war. The General Staff and the War Office, instead of working hand in hand, have always been at daggers drawn, and it is an open secret that for some time General Soukhomlinov and General Januschkievitch have not been upon speaking terms with each other. The Grand Duke swears by Januschkievitch, who thinks himself a military genius. There was a violent scene at Headquarters when the Grand Duke refused to submit to the suggestion to change the Head of the Staff. Januschkievitch, however, as you know already, has been removed and appointed to the Caucasus, where probably he will quarrel with Count Vorontzow. People wonder here what the Grand Duke will do now the clerical party—which is very powerful at Tsarskoye Selo—has been urging the Emperor to remove his Imperial cousin from the post of Commander-in-Chief; but no one thinks that the monarch will summon sufficient energy for so decisive a step.

"As regards the all-important question of ammunition, however, I really think that things are improving. The commission appointed by the Duma has been doing wonders, and all the factories in the Empire are being set to work at top speed. On the other hand, the Siberian railway is at last bringing to us guns and rifles and shells, and other necessities from America and Japan. It is quite certain that a few months hence we shall be able to attempt an offensive against the German armies. But then it will be winter, when nothing very serious can be done. Spring, however, is sure to see great things, and perhaps we shall be able to teach the Kaiser a lesson which he will not forget in a hurry. You must not lose sight of the fact that each of his so-called great victories have been obtained through entering an open door. His quick advance in

Poland and Lithuania was due to our having left him a free field. With the exception of Tannenberg, which was more a trap than anything else, he has not won any battle decisive enough to enable him to dictate to us his conditions. The greatest endurance is what will tell in the long run in this struggle, and the Junkers will never display the same patience and stubborn determination as our ignorant moujiks, who die cheerfully and courageously, and with that strong faith which still exists in the country, though it is dead everywhere else."

As events proved later, my correspondent was not such a bad judge of the circumstances under which Russia was fighting against the united armies of Francis Joseph and William II. Curiously as it may strike the reader, it nevertheless is a fact that after what certainly were great reverses, or at least what would have been great reverses under other conditions, the chances of Russia winning the war increased instead of diminished. For one thing, all the energies which had lain dormant in the nation were roused and prompted the doing of something towards that final victory which was the sole aim of the people. It was a great pity that the government did not succeed at this critical period in inspiring the public with confidence, and that it applied itself to crush every independent manifestation of opinion either in the Press or in society. M. Gorémykin, indeed, was now too old. No one would deny that he had long experience, but it had been bought under quite different conditions, and he had never accommodated himself to modern circumstances. He still adhered to the usages of his youth and middle age, and dominated his colleagues rather than discussed with them; he allowed not the slightest independence. As the leader of government in a semi-autocratic country as Russia still was, he lacked knowledge of the altered conditions, and could not realise that the crisis it was going through was far too serious and far too grave to be ignored

or arrogantly crushed. A younger and more energetic man would never have tolerated excesses like those which took place in Moscow, and, instead of exciting the evil passions of the crowds, would have attempted to keep them under control.

This was precisely the thing which M. Gorémykin never could realise, and his administration, though it tried hard to be just and Liberal, renewed all the ancient modes of tyranny for which the Russian government had always been noted.

Whilst the Germans were advancing into Lithuania and Russian society watched events with terror; whilst one fortress after another fell into the hands of our unwearied adversary; whilst the Duma was giving vent to its indignation and its apprehensions concerning the future fate of the campaign, what was the Emperor doing? No man certainly in his vast realm suffered more than he must have done at that time. The keen sense of duty which always distinguished Nicholas II., the feelings of responsibility which from the very first day of his reign weighed so heavily upon him, must at this most trying juncture have added sorrow upon sorrow. He had paid several visits to the front, and done his best to cheer the soldiers with his presence. But at the headquarters of the army, where, Sovereign though he was, he found himself subordinate to the Grand Duke, who alone issued the orders on all questions relating to the military situation, the Emperor was far too conscientious to mix himself up with matters which he did not understand thoroughly, and he was careful not to embarrass his cousin. The anomaly of his position, however, had been noticed by the troops, who began to murmur at his self-effacement.

A personage, whose name it is useless to mention here, but who was in the confidence of the reigning Empress, and exercised a considerable influence over her mind, and who for reasons of his own hated Nicholas Nicholaievitch,

set himself to the task of rectifying this state of affairs. The Emperor was told that the whole nation wished for the removal of the Grand Duke, who had not proved worthy of the confidence that had been reposed in him at the outset of the campaign, and that it was supremely necessary to relieve him of the Supreme Command. To find someone to replace the Grand Duke Nicholas was a considerable difficulty, because the only military personality whose capabilities would have made him an eligible candidate, General Roussky, was not high enough in rank to step into a position that had been filled by a member of the Imperial House. At this stage, Gregory Rasputin—the much talked about vagrant monk, who had free entry to the Imperial Palace on account of the protection with which he was honoured by the Empress Alexandra—sought Nicholas II., and told him that the nation required their Tsar, and no one else, to take command of the army in the field.

For a few weeks the monarch hesitated. The question was an excessively grave one. His action would be commented upon both at home and abroad; in one sense it would be an avowal of defeat, whilst in another it might prove an incentive and add to the enthusiasm of the soldiers. It was at all events a hazardous step to take, and no one felt this more than Nicholas II. At last he yielded to the prayers of his wife and the advice of several persons in whom he had great confidence. The Emperor, without warning his cousin, sent him an Imperial Rescript thanking him for his valuable and precious services, and appointing him his Viceroy in the Caucasus, in place of Count Vorontzow, who for some time had begged to be relieved from his duties, which neither his advanced age (he was close on eighty) nor the state of his health allowed him to perform to his satisfaction.

According to rumours in Petrograd at that time, it was only twenty-four hours before the publication of the

Imperial order concerning him that the Grand Duke Nicholas heard authentically that it was contemplated to remove him from his command.

On the 4th September, 1915, the Tsar, who had been spending a few days in Tsarskoye Selo, reached once more the Headquarters of the army. On the next day the news was published that he had decided to assume the command over his forces at the front. A religious service was celebrated in the field, to call the blessings of the Almighty on the new Chief of the brave Russian armies, and one of the most momentous events of the whole campaign passed off as unostentatiously as if it had been an everyday occurrence.

The conduct of the Grand Duke Nicholas was admirably dignified. He issued an address to the soldiers whom he had led through many difficulties for more than twelve months; and after thanking them for their courage and their devotion to duty during all that trying time, he expressed the hope that, now they were deemed worthy of the honour of being commanded by their Sovereign in person, they would continue to show the same fine qualities they had shown before. He did not complain; did not say one word that might have led the public to think that he felt hurt at the blow which had thus fallen, and which must have appeared doubly painful to him after the triumphs which had been his when he accompanied the Emperor during the Tsar's visit to Galicia. Now Galicia was again an Austrian province, and not only had the victorious Russian armies been driven away from it, but they had been compelled to abandon Poland and Lithuania and the proud fortresses which were to have proved impregnable. The contrast was bitter indeed, and a stronger man than the Grand Duke might have felt it in all its acuteness; but he remained impassive, and this proud and disdainful attitude won for him a certain sullen respect which his individuality had never inspired before.

On the 6th August the Grand Duke left the Headquarters for his new destination. An Imperial train was to take him straight to Tiflis, and the Emperor himself came to wish him good-bye. Uncle and nephew exchanged greetings which to the spectators seemed to be as warm and as sincere as they had ever been. When at last the engine began to glide away from the little field-station, the commanding figure of Nicholas Nicholaievitch could be seen standing at the open door of the railway-car with his hand raised at the salute. His Sovereign, who also saluted from the platform, waited until the train had carried out of sight the man who, all powerful a few hours before, was now sent away into an exile which he accepted without a murmur.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DUMA AND THE CRISIS.

I HAVE not yet, in the sad story of our retreat from Galicia and Poland, referred to the internal condition of Russia during that anxious time. Nor have I related anything concerning the debates of the Duma. In spite of the severe criticisms which were directed against the Cabinet and the administration by the leaders of the different parties in the Legislative Assembly, the general tone of the speeches was marked by the deepest patriotism, and pointed to a sincere desire to second the Sovereign in the difficult and responsible task which lay upon his shoulders. It was a great pity that M. Gorémykin deceived himself as to what lay at the bottom of these debates; he interpreted wrongly the expressions of dismay at the mistakes committed by the War Office and the administration in general. Had he met the deputies half way, it is certain that a great deal more might have been done in the question of the national defence than was actually performed. It is even more to be regretted that his timorous character induced him to advise the Emperor to prorogue the Duma at the very time it might have been useful, and its patriotism of avail to sustain the country in the hour of its trial. However, this is a point for later reference.

The Duma and the Council of State assembled on the 1st of August, at the date which had been assigned for their meeting in the Imperial Rescript addressed to M. Gorémykin. A few days before, nearly all the deputies

had arrived at Petrograd, where they held party meetings to decide as to the course of action which they meant to follow. A ministerial declaration was, of course, expected, and it became a question as to how it was to be received. It must not be forgotten that at this particular moment the indignation against the government had reached its maximum. The country had learned that it had not been prepared for the terrible war which had been forced upon it; that it lacked guns, rifles, shells, and ammunition; and that it might have had all these things had it not been for the carelessness and the greed of certain people who had enriched themselves at the expense of their Fatherland, and had not hesitated to waste its resources unscrupulously and uselessly. It was therefore but natural that an echo of this indignation should be heard among the deputies assembled together to express their opinion concerning the measures to be taken in order to stop, if possible, the progress of the enemy.

The Duma was opened by its President, M. Rodsianko, who read the Imperial Ukase calling it together, after which he addressed the Assembly. His exordium did not disguise the gravity of the situation:

"It is exactly one year to-day since the opening of this terrible war, which has already claimed so many victims. This war is without parallel in history, and in order to obtain a complete victory over the enemy the country will have to exert all its strength and to remain united, no matter what happens in the dark future that lies before us.

"In those days of anxiety and peril our mighty Sovereign has decided to fulfil the wishes of the nation, and—desirous of hearing the voice of Russia—has called together the Imperial Duma. With a firm faith in the strength of his beloved subjects, His Majesty expects unity from all the public and official spheres, from Russian industry, and

from the faithful sons of our dear Fatherland, no matter what may be their social condition. This ought to be our first aim, and it is the one which must inspire all our actions. The Imperial Duma will therefore begin its labours in full comprehension of what its Sovereign expects it to perform in these momentous times.

"You are requested to tell the government your opinion and the absolute truth—a truth which is indispensable in order to get at the root of things. And all your speeches, even if they occasion some discussion, ought to lead to the setting aside of the difficulties under which Russia is labouring at present.

"I feel convinced that, even during the most heated discussions, none will forget that not far from us, on the battlefields on which so much Russian blood has flowed, stands a threatening and formidable foe, which the Russian army, our army, confronts with its usual courage, and with quiet determination awaits the moment when it will be able to march forward. For a whole year it has stood under the fire and the shells of our enemies, and it has held high the flag of our national honour without flinching for one single instant, and it is your duty now to approve its bravery and to send it from here a token of your gratitude and admiration."

The speech continued with friendly words addressed to Russia's Allies, which were warmly received, after which M. Rodsianko proceeded to explain to the assembly the different points that ought to engage its attention, and ended by affirming in the most solemn accents that Russia would and ought to fight to the end. He finished his speech by calling upon the Duma to acclaim General Roussky, who happened to be sitting in one of the galleries reserved for spectators, and so do honour not only to him, but to the whole Russian army. The cheer which was given was taken up by all, and its echoes resounded

through the old palace which had witnessed in a distant past the pomps and grandeur of the Court of Catherine II.

After the introductory words of the President, the Prime Minister, M. Gorémykin, ascended the tribune of the Duma. His speech was much colder than that of M. Rodsianko, and began by the delivery of a message of greeting from the Emperor to the Assembly. It was one of those official communications which could not appeal to the feelings of anyone.

The Prime Minister was succeeded by the newly appointed Minister of War, General Polivanow, who made for the first time his appearance before the representatives of the nation. He had been called upon to replace General Soukhomlinov, and was known to be a personal enemy of his predecessor, a fact that added to the unpleasantness of his personal situation, as his every step would be construed by ill-natured persons as being a direct disavowal of all that had been done before he had assumed the task of repairing the mistakes of the War Office. He was a high-principled man, and had felt cruelly the horrors of the war he was expected to help to bring to a successful close, his only son having fallen on one of the battlefields of Eastern Prussia. He therefore could understand and realise in all its bitterness the agony of Russia, and perhaps for that very reason much was expected from him.

When he appeared before the Duma he was greeted with wild cheers, and was listened to with grave attention. His speech was delivered with military precision and in simple, unsophisticated language that went at once to the heart.

"It is exactly one hundred years ago," he began, "by the sacrifices and efforts of the Russian nation, and with the help of Russian blood which flowed freely on many battlefields, that the independence of Germany and of the

small states which composed it at that time was assured, and that the German princes were able to escape from under the iron heel of the great Napoleon. And to-day we begin the second year of a war in which these same states fell on us without the slightest provocation.

"Our enemy, Germany, who has succeeded in raising against us the forces of Austria-Hungary and of Turkey, is a formidable enemy, more so because for forty-two years Prussia had been preparing for war.

"The results obtained after twelve months' campaign against that enemy can be summed up in a few simple words. Victory belonged in turn to us and to him, and at the present moment it is certainly on the side of the German.

"The geographical character of our frontiers, with German and Austrian territory on either side at several points, has been all along a weakness to our activity in regions where it exists, and has considerably hampered any strategic movements we wanted to make. We must remember this in justice to our army, as we rejoice at their victories, and sorrow when they suffer defeat. But at the same time there is one feeling which never changes among us all—that is, the absolute conviction which we have that this war ought to be continued until we have won it."

The Minister then, after a long tribute to the tenacity and heroism of the Russian armies on each of the battle-fronts, brought his speech round to the question of munitions. "The Germans," he said, "have ranged against us artillery many times more powerful than ever used in any previous war, and spent it with unlimited prodigality. It has, indeed, only been by our soldiers' indomitable courage that we overcame so often the enemy's superiority in ammunition—at an awful expense in men.

"The War Office intends to submit to you a Bill calling

out the second contingent of our reserves. These will give us something like eight millions of men to be called up as occasion demands. From what we have been able to observe, we have formed the opinion that the agricultural position of Russia has not suffered materially in the twelve months' war—a fact both of national importance and encouragement.

"The most important and the most difficult question in regard to the continuation of this war is that of munitions. If victory depends entirely upon this, as it seems to do, then it is indispensable we also should learn to develop this particular branch of industry. The position of France and England stands very much better than ours does in this matter.

"We must not lose time, but make use of all the powers the nation has at its disposal to strengthen and execute our programme of national defence. This is what our Sovereign expects of all his faithful subjects, the sons of our beloved Fatherland."

The speech of General Polivanow produced an excellent impression on the Duma, already favourably disposed toward the orator. He was heartily cheered when he went back to his seat, and even the Socialist members refrained from their customary and systematic opposition. Everybody felt that he had been frankly straightforward, and that he had not attempted to minimise the dangers of a situation which caused such general anxiety all over Russia. He was followed by the Naval Minister, Admiral Grigorovitch, who, however, failed to arouse sympathy among the Assembly, partly because no one gave a thought to the possibility of our navy playing an important part in the war. After he had come to the end of the tedious story which he unfolded at still more tedious length, M. Sazonov tried to convey to the Duma the diplomatic situation; his remarks, however, were nothing but plati-

tudes. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, notwithstanding his invariably strong common sense, had not the gift of eloquence, and had never been popular either in the country or in the Duma, where he had been accused more than once of lacking determination, and of trying to please the world and his wife! Even the few words which he spoke concerning Japan passed without exciting any attention. The Duma did not even listen to M. Bark when he introduced the financial programme. The deputies were impatient to begin the discussions; every member was eager to express his personal opinion on the complicated situation. The smell of powder was in the air, but the expected explosion did not take place on the opening day.

The first to ascend the tribune after the ministerial speeches was a representative of the extreme Right, M. Markoff, who began by reproaching the other parties for their desire to obtain from the Sovereign the appointment of a Cabinet responsible to the people. Two curious points in this speech of M. Markoff were his comment that Jews ought in any case to be expelled from all the large towns, where they were only allowed to exist on sufferance, and the strong manner in which he expressed himself concerning the necessity of exiling Germans into the far-away provinces of the Empire, as their presence anywhere near the seat of war constituted a public danger. His words expressed the programme of the extreme Right. The Nationalists had asked Count Bobrinsky, a man enjoying the respect of all the parties represented in the Duma, to speak in their name on this momentous occasion. He did so in a strong but gentlemanly speech, which appealed even to those who did not share his political opinions and convictions. His discourse was considered to have been one of the best ever heard within the walls of the Duma. His first words stirred his listeners and gained their sympathies:

"I will not speak as a member of a political party," he began, "because at the present moment no one in this Assembly belongs to a party; all have one idea—that of defeating the cruel, resolute, and strong foe with whom we find ourselves confronted, of sweeping him out of our territory, and of destroying him entirely. There may exist differences of opinion as to how we are going to do it, but even in their presence I shall repeat what not long ago I told my political adversary, M. Struwe—that when it becomes necessary for us to stand face to face with our enemy, we shall forget all party differences in order to become patriots. Our army has shown itself worthy of its past renown and fame, and it is our duty to provide it with all that it requires to make our victory sure.

"The country needs internal reforms," he continued, "but these reforms will only become possible when peace has been restored to the world and to our beloved Russia. At present we expect the Government to tell us the whole truth concerning the armaments of our army and of our fleet. The Duma ought in its turn to examine with sceptical eyes, no longer blinded, all the documents and the details put at its disposal, and not to refrain from criticising the Ministers where necessary. They must determine that former mistakes shall be repaired, and give the country their confidence. This responsibility, heavy as it is, we mean to assume. We have no intention of making the position of the government harder than it is already, but at the same time we mean to exact from it the fulfilment of the duties which it has assumed. It has a great deal of power, and this power ought to be exercised for the common good of the whole nation.

"Perhaps it is not the time to speak of the abuses, the omissions, and the faults committed in the past by those members of the government whose place perhaps ought to be in the criminal dock; but we request the government to prove to us that it has decided to get rid of the

old pernicious routine which has so continually hampered its good intentions."

Count Bobrinsky ended his speech by moving a resolution which was accepted not only by the Nationalist party, but also by the Centre and the Octobrists, the sense of which was that the Duma had made up its mind not to end the war before the complete defeat of its enemies; that in concert with its Allies it would go on with the struggle until that aim had been accomplished; and that at the same time it was convinced that the best means to bring it about was a perfect union of all the political parties in the country and common action with the government.

The leader of the Centre, M. Lvoff, spoke in the same terms as Count Bobrinsky; but M. Savitch, in the name of the Octobrists, sharply criticised the government.

"There has never yet existed in Russia," he said, "an administration that has taken to heart the interests of the country; our War Office has never been prepared for any war—as the loss of the Japanese conflict testified, as also the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, and earlier still the Crimean campaign, proved. This lamentable state of things is due to the lack of intelligent people at the War Office. The third Duma tried to attract the attention of the Cabinet to the bad organisation of the artillery department, but no notice was taken. The Duma, ever since it has existed, has done its duty in that respect, but the government has done absolutely nothing at all. Worse, indeed, as I would like to remind you gentlemen. A few years ago we were asked to vote credits for the construction of new cruisers, torpedo boats, and submarines. For reasons which are too long to enter into here, and which are well known to you, the Duma refused the credits required for the cruisers, but not only granted those she was requested to vote for the torpedo boats and the submarines, but insisted that these should be built immediately. The government did

exactly the opposite to what the Duma wished. The cruisers were constructed, and nothing was done to increase our submarine fleet. And this is not an isolated case; such things have happened continually.

"This discord between the Legislative Assembly and the government, and the latter's disregard for public opinion, is the principal cause of the small respect which it inspires, and one of the reasons for its weakness on the subject of internal reforms. Rightly or wrongly, the nation has come to the conviction that the government can do nothing well, and facts justify it.

"I feel certain that we shall win the war. We have lost many precious months, but I am of the opinion that within a short time our many mistakes will have been repaired. Our natural resources are inexhaustible; the enthusiasm and spirit of self-sacrifice of our population know no limit. And the Duma means to give every help to the government. We must retrieve the past. The spilt blood of our brave army calls out for vengeance."

The speech of M. Savitch was freely discussed in the lobbies later on. No one believed that the Octobrist leader would have come out with such sharp criticisms of the government, and one wondered what reply M. Gorémykin would make. A Polish deputy spoke of the necessity of pursuing the war until the bitter end, and of the attachment of the Polish population to its Russian masters—an assertion which was not believed by anybody. He was listened to with scant attention, as the Duma was awaiting with impatience for the appearance at its tribune of the members belonging to the Opposition.

The first speaker who voiced the feelings of the parties determined to claim constitutional government from the Sovereign was M. Efremov, one of the best speakers in the whole Duma. He began his speech under the strain of a deep emotion, and such an impression was made that

it weakened the effect of the words of the leader of the Progressives, M. Milioukov, who followed, and who for once was eclipsed by his colleague.

"In this hour of a great national trial," began M. Efremov, "all our thought ought to be concentrated upon our army. Its sufferings, its patience, and its spirit of endurance deserve our utmost respect and admiration. Russia knows that in the long run she is bound to emerge victorious out of this war, but this very conviction ought to give us all courage to look the truth in the face. In spite of the many warnings which it received from the Duma, the government has left the question of our armaments and of our artillery in the hands of utterly incompetent people. The former Minister of War, General Soukhomlinov, and his secretary, General Wernander, when called upon in the secret sitting of the Duma, which took place last January, to give an account of what was going on at the theatre of hostilities, declared to us that in the matter of ammunition our army was absolutely well provided for. The country says that it is time this systematic deception should cease. Russia has paid dearly enough; she has the right to know the truth. Our army also ought to learn that we, the representatives of the nation, understand very well that the army is not to blame for our reverses. We send it our warmest sympathy in the hour of its trial. The Russian soldier has surprised and startled the whole world by his courage and the quiet resolution with which he has faced all the perils which he has been called upon to undergo. But this fact entails upon us all the obligation to search for the reasons of the defeats the army has had to put up with. It is the whole system which is at fault. What we require is peace inside the country, respect for individual liberty and individual opinions, the right of every Russian citizen to think and to act freely. To surmount the present

difficulties, what is required is a strong government. We have all come here with the determination to emerge victorious out of the struggle with Germany. We are, however, aware that without the help of the nation this will be impossible, and it is just as impossible to appeal to the nation unless the government gives up its old system of repression of every manifestation of public opinion. The changes which have taken place recently in the composition of the Ministry do not give us any grounds for hoping that the government understands its duties in that respect. These changes have not given us the security which we consider indispensable, and they have not assured us of the possibility that in the future public opinion will be able to make itself heard. The critical condition in which Russia finds itself placed to-day is entirely due to its antiquated system of government. Bureaucracy must go, so that, in the presence of the enemy who has invaded such a considerable portion of our Fatherland, all Russian hearts may be filled with one thought: the wish to see our great and holy Russia prosper and triumph over its arrogant foes. With this thought in our hearts we do not fear any German, and we defy them to conquer us."

The feeling of the Duma, it will therefore be seen, was tempestuous. Its strong resentment at the ineptitude of those who wielded governing power found expression in no uncertain measure. Yet the voice of the Duma was not the voice of anarchy, but the voice of a body which, recognising failure, was determined to wrest success from chaos, and more determined than ever to cry no shameful or premature peace.

CHAPTER XV.

M. Kerensky Outlines a Policy.

It would seem as if the speech of M. Efremov, as outlined in the previous chapter, sounded the last word in the terrible indictment with which the Duma charged those in authority. The remaining speeches were neither so bitter nor so recriminatory. That is not to say, however, that they were less to be noticed. If anything, they were more laden with portent for Russia, inasmuch as they voiced the bitter discontent which for years had been the canker eating at the root of the Romanoff dynasty, and again and again emphasised that the only hope for Russia, according to the speakers, lay in the overthrow of bureaucracy, and the establishment of constitutional government not unlike that enjoyed by the British Empire. M. Milioukov, the spokesman of the Progressive party, was the first to lead the thoughts of the Duma into these new channels.

"Gentlemen," he began, "it is for the third time since the beginning of the war that we are gathered together in this place, and events have proved that the patriotic apprehensions which the representatives of the nation expressed in the past have, unfortunately, been justified by facts. All that has been carefully hidden from us has at last come to light, and the reassuring words with which the government has tried to quieten former anxieties have turned out only to have been empty and misleading words. The time has come when the country refuses to be soothed by words. It sees in us its repre-

sentatives the official executors of its wishes and desires, and it has sent us here with a very distinct and definite mission—that of telling the truth to the government, of finding out all that there is to find out concerning the conduct of this government, and of doing all that it has failed to do.

"The country refuses to believe that our valiant army has been defeated. We also know that, far from our material resources being exhausted, they are, on the contrary, so considerable that the day will yet come when we and the whole world shall find ourselves wondering at their extent. Our Allies also have not lost any of their strength, of their courage, or of their faith in themselves as well as in us. The one conclusion to which we have all come is that the nation is not afraid of hearing and of knowing the truth.

"The whole influence of the Duma for twelve months has been directed toward the organisation of all the living forces of the country in one common effort, and if the feelings of the different classes of Russian society in regard to this war are quite different from what they were during the conflict with Japan, it is due in great part to the Duma. The false political system under which we exist is why the peace of the country has always been troubled, and another reason, so far as internal affairs are concerned, is the policy pursued by the government in regard to the different nationalities of which the Empire is composed. Notwithstanding the Imperial Manifesto concerning liberty of conscience, every religious community, exclusive of the official Orthodox Church, has been persecuted by the authorities."

The speaker then reminded his listeners of the fate of the five Socialist deputies who, though recognised as innocent of treason, were still condemned to perpetual exile.

"We can quite well understand," he went on, "the need to preserve military secrets, but there is a great difference between doing that and the operations of the censor. His department shows every day its deplorable inexperience in the matters entrusted to its care. All this secrecy only gives rise to the most ridiculous and pernicious rumours. According to what we are told by people who ought to know, all the old abuses against which public opinion has continually rebelled still exist."

These words were received with loud applause, and cries, "It is true, quite true!"

"The saddest side to this sad business," continued Milioukov, "is that we cannot have any assurance that the blunders and the tragic experiences of the past will not be repeated in the future. We cannot be sure that the present Ministry will win the confidence of the nation, without which it is impossible for them to work together in perfect accord; not one single man in the Cabinet is known and respected by the country. In spite of all, however, the feelings of the country are the same to-day as they were twelve months ago. It knows that there is only the choice of two things: on one side, a peace bringing with it the assurance that nothing will trouble it again, and that the equilibrium of Europe will not be disturbed any more; on the other, a German peace, such as Germans would like to impose upon us—the establishment of Teuton tyranny all over the world. In this war lies all our past and all our future—a future in which we are determined shall not be repeated the tragedy of to-day."

The closing words of the Progressive leader were drowned in loud cheers. He was not, however, the last one to speak on that first day, when, according to the established custom, each of the parties represented in the House had the right to be heard before a general debate on the situation took place. M. Kerensky, of the extreme Radical group, fol-

lowed M. Milioukov. He characterised the conduct of the government as most mischievous for the welfare of the country.

"It is with the greatest emotion that I am speaking to-day after twelve months of war," he exclaimed. "We stand now in the same position as on the first day of the fight. It is imperative that we start afresh, but we do so under psychological, political, and economic conditions far worse than they were at that time. Nothing has been done either for the union of Russian peoples or bringing Russia into closer touch with other European nationalities. Are you not aware that when this war has come to an end we shall find ourselves face to face with thousands of Jews full of indignation and rage against us—a people who will hate us because of the treatment and falseness of our government towards them? I solemnly declare here that I have personally inquired into the accusation the government made that the Jews of the little town of Kouga fired at our troops, and I am bound to say that it was an entirely false one. Such a thing has never occurred, and, taking into account the local conditions of that spot, it could not have occurred.

"What, too, has the government done with the sincere enthusiasm which was manifested by the Poles at the beginning of the war? If we really wish to emerge in a healthy condition from the crisis of these times, we ought to insist on the truth, and the whole truth, being made known to us, as well as to the mass of the nation who have to carry on their shoulders the whole weight of our national defence. The country ought to know that at the present moment it finds itself in a most awful condition, from which the only possibility of emerging lies in every one of us, without a single exception, setting to work to repair the errors and mistakes under which Russia is suffering.

"I protest with the utmost energy against the reproaches which have been levelled at the working classes and at the labour party, said to have been induced to go on strike before the war by money received for doing so from the German government. I call upon those who have dared to repeat such a calumny to contradict it immediately, or else never to show their faces amongst us any more.

"If we examine carefully all that has taken place during this last year, we must come to the conclusion that the people in power during that time cannot be allowed to remain in office. We must insist that we, the Radical party, should be granted immediate facilities to examine freely all the social and the political questions connected with the war. In order to get out of the mire in which we have sunk it is indispensable that all the means of defence which we have should be put at the disposal and under the control of the whole nation. The granting of a general amnesty for political offences cannot be put off for one single day; if you wish for a return of the former enthusiasm which you have crushed, you must make this attempt to conciliate the nation. It is impossible to delay granting those first elementary demands for political liberty which are addressed to you from all sides. We hold the opinion that a country whose hands are tied and whose eyes are blindfolded cannot defend itself. For this reason individual liberty and equality, an uncensored Press, the right to hold public meetings, are things which must be granted with no further delay. The peasants must obtain the landed rights that have been refused to them until now, and the workmen must be liberated. . . ."

At this moment a voice coming from the Right shouted, "Enough, enough!"

"You cry 'enough' because you do not wish to see the

country saved," continued M. Kerensky; "but in Germany, in England, as well as in France, the government has lost its prejudices against the working classes, and has recognised their right to be represented wherever the vital interests of the country are at stake. You must not forget that the first need of the present moment is not to make new laws, but to create a new order of things, and to organise a strong and a healthy government. When a nation finds itself in the position in which we stand to-day, it must know how to deal with problems with a firm hand. Here we have not heard one single thing which would popularise public opinion in our country. It is not sufficient that those who have been guilty of these mistakes have been set aside, if those who succeed them hesitate before they use the resources which the country offered. Therefore we must decline to take upon us the responsibility for anything that may happen further unless we know everything that we ought to know, because half-measures will only hasten your ruin and ours. They will only create illusions and deceive those who will not realise their futility and their emptiness.

"In this critical moment I call upon Russia to take its salvation into its own hands, and to fight for the right to rule itself."

This fiery speech, in spite of its eloquence, excited little sympathy in the Duma. The majority felt that it would have been better merely to mention the abuses without sounding a cry of revolt. This discourse raised keen resentment in the minds of the extreme Right. That Right was despised not only by its colleagues, but also by the *Intelligensia* in Russia; but the timorous members of the Opposition felt that it was better to give it a long rope to hang itself, rather than to attack it in the passionate manner which Radicals and Socialists, as M. Kerensky, had thought fit to adopt in the Duma. The general feeling

which existed among the moderate elements of the Assembly was that, before attacking them, one ought to give the new Ministers a chance to show what they meant to do in regard to national defence, and also whether they meant to be a responsible Ministry, not taking refuge behind the Sovereign when it became difficult to parry inconvenient questions.

Had M. Gorémykin possessed the slightest *savoir faire*, to use the French expression, he would have taken advantage of the favourable attitude of the Duma, and obtained its help in the many matters connected with the needs of the army. Unfortunately, he was too old, and understood too little the moral psychology of the country and of its representatives to realise that criticism did not mean hostility, and that a discussion, violent though it might be, offered no serious danger to the solidarity of an Empire which no one, so far, not even the Socialists, had dreamt of attacking. Had he been wise, he ought to have allowed people to speak, and then to ask for their co-operation in the great task Russia had to face. But M. Gorémykin had the idea that a government can do no wrong, and in its own strength can cope with any upheaval of public opinion. Unfortunately for Russia, he succeeded in imbuing the Emperor with the same thought, and, posing as a strong man, he simply developed the bitter antipathies of his opponents, thus sowing the seeds of a revolt that, sooner or later, was bound to burst forth.

When he was forced to part with his two favourites, M. Maklakov the Minister of the Interior, and M. Scheglowitov the Minister of Justice, he replaced the one by M. Khvostov, an honest man who was sure, sooner or later, to display his unfitness for the difficult position in which he had been placed; and the other by Prince Nicholas Scherbatov, a perfect gentleman who had interested himself for years in the economic conditions of Russia, and been a member of the Zemstvo of the government

of Poltava, where he owned a large territorial property, but who had no real idea of how the Ministry of the Interior ought to be managed. He was at first sympathetically received by the Duma, but when he spoke for the first time he fell into a blunder which at once deprived him of the support of many who otherwise would have stood by him. The discussion concerned religious toleration, and the manner in which the government systematically persecuted all dissenters, notwithstanding the promise of the Emperor to allow them to be free from molestation. Prince Scherbatov, in speaking for the government, threw prudence to the winds, and allowed himself to say that though personally he was extremely tolerant in all matters of religion, he felt compelled to add that he considered that the Baptists, of whom there are a considerable number in Russia, were very dangerous people who ought to be persecuted and suppressed by every means. As proof of his affirmation he declared that once he had seen in a Baptist religious paper, *published in London*, a portrait of the German Emperor, which clearly showed that this sect was closely connected with Germany. The stupidity of this utterance sealed the fate of Prince Scherbatov, for no one supported him or took his part in the whole Duma. Being otherwise very conscientious, he could not work amicably with M. Gorémykin, who found him far too liberal, and too desirous to respect the privileges of the Legislative Assembly. When the question of proroguing the Chambers came under consideration, the Prince strongly opposed this measure, declaring that it might open the door to a period of social unrest, such as was highly undesirable during the war. This opinion the President of the Council and others among his colleagues did not share, and a heated discussion on the subject took place in the presence of the Emperor, to whom M. Gorémykin had repaired, in order to confer on the political situation. On the one hand, even the veteran felt that it would

prove a source of strength to the government if it were to rely on the fidelity and co-operation of the members of the Duma; on the other, and this was the real reason for the prorogation, some other unpleasant disclosures concerning the administration of the War Office had come to light by the energy of General Polivanow, and it was feared that, if these should come to be publicly discussed in Parliament, the effect produced might endanger the very existence of the government, and at the least expose it to still severer criticism. This was undesirable, in view of the wishes of the Sovereign not to part with M. Gorémykin while the war lasted. He was sure of the honesty of the aged Minister, and of his absolute devotion to a dynasty he had served for nearly sixty years, and in the troubled times Russia was going through Nicholas II. did not care to face the unknown, or to have to work with anyone with whom he could not discuss so freely as with M. Gorémykin many sore points that had robbed him of his sleep and added many years to his age.

Under these circumstances the prorogation of the Duma became a necessity—perhaps a mistaken one, but a necessity all the same—when looking at things from the particular viewpoint I have just mentioned. Prince Scherbatov was of a different opinion, and though he put his name at the bottom of the decree, he did so only under protest, and because he could not very well refuse. Soon afterwards his resignation was accepted by the Sovereign, and M. Gorémykin was left free to rule Russia according to his own ideas, which were *not* those popular with the country.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE JEWS.

IF any of my readers feel that I have dealt at undue length with the debates of the Duma I ask forgiveness, but I am trying to convey a description of the feelings of Russian society during the war, rather than a history of the war, which I am not competent enough to write from the military point of view. It is indispensable, therefore, to show first what was thought in Russia in war time; and, secondly, the extent of the effort which was being made by the whole nation at this critical period of its existence.

The difficulties under which Russia laboured were far greater than she was ever given credit for, and they far surpassed those of her Allies. At the same time, the patriotism of the whole Russian nation never wavered, and its faith in its own resources and in the valiance of its army was never shaken, not even when several of the richest provinces fell into the hands of the enemy.

Though Russia did not and could not countenance many things which were done by her government, yet this did not interfere either with her patriotism or with her determination to do all that she could in order to win the war. The nation wanted to hear the truth; but, unfortunately, the government would not understand the motives which lay at the bottom of this general desire to become aware of the worst. It feared the just criticisms which undoubtedly would have assailed its conduct had it been revealed in its nakedness before the eyes of the

general public, and it did not wish the army to become cognisant of the real facts. This secrecy in all matters of vital interest to the Russian nation was bound to end one day in a catastrophe of some kind, and this baseless dread of free discussion only increased the difficulties of the situation. It would have been relatively easy, nay, almost natural and justifiable, to raise the standard of revolt against the Cabinet, but patriotism held it back. At the time when the first Duma of the Empire was dissolved, every deputy expressed his indignation at that unwarrantable measure; yet when the present one was prorogued, at a moment when it was in reality more than necessary that the government should have sought its co-operation in setting everybody to work for it, no one among its members attempted to rebel. The country, through its representatives, submitted to what was firmly believed to be a tyrannous as well as a mistaken measure; and though the Ministers were criticised, yet they were not opposed. Russia, from the point of view which I have just now mentioned, certainly gave an admirable example of patriotism to the world.

I do not believe that the extent of her inferiority in regard to Germany in the matter of her armaments has ever been thoroughly known abroad—not even, at first, by her Allies. One thus fails to appreciate the magnitude of the effort she made in order to overcome the obstacles. Whilst the German Press was doing its best to represent her as demoralised, broken, and unable to offer any serious resistance to the Teuton hordes, she was in reality gathering her strength and allowing her enemies to laugh at her until the moment when, with renewed vigour and fully armed, she would be able to lead once more her own brave soldiers—to death, perhaps, but certainly to victory.

The sentiments expressed in the Duma were those which animated the whole of Russia. What the nation claimed, and what the Duma claimed for it, was, in the

words of the Progressive deputy, M. Roditschev, "The right for every Russian to become a Russian citizen." The root of all the evil which had fallen upon the Russia of Peter the Great and of Catherine was that a Russian man was not a Russian citizen, and this perhaps explains the ocean of suffering and of misery in which so many innocent people were to find the death of their hopes and of their expectations to be allowed to work for the defence of their beloved Russia. Taking these facts into consideration, it is not surprising that in an incredibly short time many of the errors of the past were repaired, and that the Russian army received at last the ammunition which it required to allow the struggle to be renewed.

The first day of the debates of the Duma had thrown sufficient light in regard to the deficiencies of the War Office. There were other questions just as important waiting to be thrashed out, so as to remove the various shadows that might have darkened the real intentions of Russia. The Jewish question had always been acute, and it was generally recognised that the time had come when the difference of rights which existed between the Israelitish subjects of the Tsar and those belonging to the Christian faith should at last be put an end to. Unfortunately, ever since the war had broken out the military as well as the civil authorities looked on all Jews with suspicion, and considered them as dangers to the State. Terrible cases of cruelty had been committed in regard to Hebrews, and this notwithstanding the fact that Jews without number had volunteered to join the ranks, without being obliged to do so, and were fighting the German invader side by side with Russians. The more tolerant parties had, therefore, resolved to claim publicly for their Jewish brethren equality of treatment and of rights, and the end of a persecution which denied to them not only the right of citizenship, but even that of existence. During the second sitting of the Duma a member belonging to

the Jewish community, Deputy Friedmann, made the following remarks concerning the position in which his co-religionists had been placed ever since the beginning of the war:

"Gentlemen," he said, "before proceeding to disclose a number of painful facts, I must ask you to notice that, in spite of the hardships connected with their position and the many injustices from which they are the continual victims, the Jews in Russia have known how to perform their duties as Russian citizens, and during the year which has now gone they have offered themselves freely to fight for our Fatherland. They have not availed themselves of the privilege conferred by the law which exempts the only sons of parents from becoming soldiers. The newspapers, since the war broke out, have published numerous cases of Jews volunteering as common soldiers, notwithstanding the fact that they have the right to enter the army as officers. They knew very well that this would never be allowed, and they preferred fighting as privates to not fighting at all. Jewish youths who were studying abroad returned to Russia, and of their own free will joined the ranks, or else enlisted in the armies of our Allies. Numerous Jewish students have fallen during the battles in Belgium and under the walls of Liége and Namur. The Jews have built hospitals, have given large sums of money, and have taken their part in every effort to help the army. Many Jews have been awarded war medals and decorations. And yet how have their efforts and their patriotism been rewarded? I am going to read to you a letter which I have received from a Jewish youth who had emigrated to the United States. This is what he says: 'I loved my country better than my life and liberty which I was enjoying in America, so I decided to return to Russia, and landed at Archangel. I was accepted in the army, and lost my left arm at the shoulder. I was

sent to Courland. I had scarcely reached Riga when the first sight which met my eyes was that of my father and mother and other members of my family at the railway station, waiting for a train that was to carry them away to an unknown destination. They had been expelled that same day by order of the military authorities. I want to tell you that I do not regret the loss of my arm so much as that of my dignity as a human being, which I enjoyed when I was in America.'

" Such are the people whom the government persecutes and whose patriotism it doubts. Instead of appreciating the feelings which caused Jews to come forward and shed their blood on the numerous battlefields, our authorities sought to render their lot even more unbearable than it had been formerly. Jews and Jewesses whose sons, husbands, and fathers were falling and fighting for our Fatherland were driven from their dwellings, cast upon a merciless world helpless and miserable to seek their living. A soldier called Alexander Rogoff, who had been shot through both eyes, was not allowed to remain in hospital at Kharkov. Another one called Godlewski, who had lost one of his legs and was in a hospital at Rostov, was to be sent to Kalisz, whence he came, though his wounds were not even healed, Kalisz being already then in German hands; and it was with the greatest trouble that he was allowed to remain where he was. An apothecary, who had been dangerously wounded in the chest, had orders to leave Petrograd before he was cured, but, owing to the efforts of some influential people, permission was granted for him to remain for two months in the capital, on the understanding that no further delay would be tolerated. You must and you will agree with me that such things are a shame to all, for the whole of the Russian nation, if one did not know that it is innocent, and that the blame rests on the authorities alone. It is true that a circular from the Minister of the Interior has been sent

out authorising the families of Jews who had joined the army to remain in their former places of residence; but this circular does not apply to the Jews who have been wounded, and the latter may be and are mercilessly expelled when they attempt to return to their own homes. While speaking about injustices, I must also draw attention to the fact that the Jewish Press has been suppressed, and this deprives thousands of Jews who cannot read Russian of the possibility of learning what is going on at the front where their children are fighting. Such facts speak for themselves. A false report has been put into circulation in Poland that the Jews had sent all their money to Germany, and placed it at the disposal of the German government. They have been accused of spying on our armies, of betraying those for whom their sons were dying every day.

"Not only from the kingdom of Poland, but from all other provinces of our Empire, Jews were exiled to the depths of Siberia, or to northern provinces where it was next to impossible for them to exist. Out of the little town of Mogilnitze five thousand people were turned adrift in one day. Their road lay through Kalwaria to Warsaw. But they were not permitted to travel by it, and had to trudge through cross-roads on the way to Lublin, without being allowed to carry away with them a single possession. Most of them had to walk the whole distance. When they reached Lublin the Jewish committee in that town had prepared them some food and a place where they could rest. But they were not allowed even this respite or permitted to take the food which had been offered to them. A misfortune happened to one of these families. One of their children, a little girl of six years old, fell from the cart in which she was sitting and was killed on the spot. Her parents were forbidden to pick her up and bury her. I have seen Jews from Kovno, people who the day before had been rich and prosperous, now reduced

to absolute beggary. I have seen, among these homeless people, ladies and young girls who had been for months working side by side with Russians in the hospitals and in Red Cross work. They were rich, they had given thousands of roubles for the needs of the wounded and the other sufferers from the war, and now they were lying on the ground by the railway line with only the scantiest of clothing. I have seen soldiers who had lost their limbs, and others who were decorated with the Cross of St. George, brutally driven away by policemen out of their native towns, to which their military commanders had sent them. I have seen all this and many things besides. Others than myself have seen them too; friends of mine witnessed wounded soldiers coming home who had to see their wives and children cast out. Jews were sent away in open trucks like cattle, and labelled '450 Jews,' as if they were less than human beings. Governors of some provinces where these Jews were sent refused to receive them; I have seen with my own eyes in Vilna trains in which Jews were locked up left for four days at the station of Novo Wileyskaya. They contained Jews who had been sent from Kovno to Poltava; there the governor absolutely refused to allow them to remain, and sent them back to Kovno, whence they were again dispatched to Poltava. Just think of this. At a time when we urgently required every available railway truck for taking ammunition to the front, when from every side were heard complaints concerning the scarcity of transport conveyances, the government used those available for the purpose of taking unfortunate Jews from one place of exile to another. At one station alone over 110 cars remained full of these Jews. Another cruelty was that hostages were taken not amongst the enemy, but amongst the Jewish people, whose life was to answer for the good behaviour of their co-religionists. This happened at Radom, Kielce, Lomga, Kovno, Riga, Lublin, and many other places. These

hostages were kept under severe surveillance, and to this day there are in Poltava Jewish prisoners taken in the governments of Kielce and Radom. The Hebrew population of the province of Kovno were given the chance to return to their homes, provided they consented to give hostages who would pay the penalty for any misdemeanour which might be committed. When this reached my knowledge, I sent—in my position as deputy for the government of Kovno—a letter to the President of the Council of Ministers, in which I told him that the Kovno Jews preferred death and exile to the shame of complying with a request that sullied their honour, and that they would go on fulfilling their duties as Russian citizens in the future just as well as they had done in the past. The offer made to them to return to their homes under dishonourable conditions was only another insult added to those which they had already suffered. I received no reply to my letter, unless one can consider as such the concession made the other day to Jews to settle on the Finnish coast. When I have told you all this I have not mentioned half of the sufferings which the Jews have had to endure in our country. There have been cases where Jewish women have been outraged, Jewish property plundered, and Jewish houses destroyed, and all this has taken place under the eyes of the authorities. I am not going to bring forward further isolated cases which have come to my knowledge from absolutely trustworthy sources, but I shall mention them in the next secret sitting of the Duma, and bring all documentary evidence to establish that they have actually taken place. For instance, I have in my possession a certificate from the military governor of the town of Lublin that the Jews there have always been most correct in their behaviour toward the authorities, and that they have upon every possible occasion shown themselves absolutely loyal. This certificate was given to the President of the Jewish Relief Committee to be presented in case of

necessity, because no law allows the unjust and unjustifiable exile of thousands of human beings whose only crime consists in belonging to a persecuted race. If the government wants to return to the times of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, then I say now that we have already surpassed them by far. No Jewish blood was ever spilt for the defence of the Spanish kingdom, whilst for the sake of our country Jews in thousands have shed their blood. The entire Jewish race has been accused of treason, but its whole conduct since the beginning of this war has given the lie to such an accusation. The Jews, however, know very well who has spread this calumny against them and against their honour "—and the speaker pointed to the place where sat the Ministers. "It is the government that persecuted the Jews; it is not the Russian nation nor the Russian people, and it is from the latter that the whole Jewish population of our Empire hopes one day to obtain the same rights as every other Russian citizen.

"It is also before the whole of Russia," went on M. Friedmann, "and before the whole civilised world that I solemnly deny the calumnies which have been showered upon my co-religionists. And those who try to disseminate them are people who have themselves infringed human and Divine laws which they ought to have respected.

"You have all read," continued the speaker, "and, indeed, it has been related all over Russia, that in the village of Kouga one of our detachments had suffered in consequence of the treasonable denunciation of its Jewish inhabitants. One of our colleagues, the Deputy Kerensky, went there at once to inquire into this so-called incident. He found that no such thing had happened, and that there did not exist in the whole place a single cellar where German soldiers could have been concealed, as had been related. The only cellar which could be found in the village certainly did belong to a Jew, but its length was four yards, its width three yards, and it was lower than a

man's ordinary height. No useful number of soldiers could possibly have been concealed there. It was proved further that the defeat which we sustained in this place occurred on the 28th of May, and that on the 27th all its Jewish population had left with the consent of the military authorities—a consent which, of course, would not have been given had they been guilty of crime. We are perfectly well aware that the facts which I have just mentioned are known to the government, and, notwithstanding this, it has not contradicted this untruth; on the contrary, it continues to spread the fiction at every opportunity. Among all our sufferings, and amidst all that we have lost in the last twelve months, what strikes us most painfully is the moral wrong which is done to us by those who ought to know better, who must be aware that we are being maligned knowingly and wickedly by the very people whose duty it ought to be to defend us. A few months ago, in a small town on the German frontier, when the approach of the enemy was momentarily expected, the Jewish population, assembled in its synagogue, was praying to God. An old Rabbi ended his supplication with the words: 'O Lord, save this town, and take our souls for it,' then suddenly fell back and expired. Such were the feelings of this venerable man; such have always been the feelings of the Jewish nation. I now appeal to you, gentlemen, to encourage us in the fulfilment of our duties. I do not know whether the Duma will listen to this prayer, but should it do so it will show itself inspired by a political wisdom which the government seems to lack."

The speech of Deputy Friedmann had an echo all over Russia, where the facts which he disclosed were for the most part unknown. Upon its listeners also it produced a deep impression, but the official Press passed it by in silence, and the government did not vouchsafe any reply. Nevertheless, public opinion, in commenting upon

it, showed itself unusually severe in the criticisms which it addressed to M. Gorémykin and his colleagues. It was generally recognised that the authorities would have done far better to have occupied themselves with more important matters of the national defence than the supposed treason of the Jewish population. Even the most ferocious Anti-Semites declared that this was not the time to persecute anybody.

It is to be noted, however, that after M. Friedmann's speech the subject of the distress of the Hebrew population of the Empire was not renewed by him, at least during the short session of the Duma. The attention of the Assembly was entirely absorbed by the appointment of the Commission which was to be entrusted with the complicated matter of the supply of ammunition to the army, and on the second day of the session the question was raised and the most animated discussion followed. But the Radical party brought forward again this terrible question of the treatment of the Jews, and its indictment of the authorities on the subject was even more shocking than that of M. Friedmann. Awful facts were disclosed, such, for instance, as the manner in which the Hebrew population of the government of Radom was expelled. The order for them to leave was communicated to the victims at eleven o'clock at night, and they were threatened that any who had not gone by daylight would be killed. On a dark night the miserable wretches started for the nearest town of Ilga, which was situated at a distance of about thirty miles. The old, the sick, and the infirm had to be carried. In the government of Kovno alone the number of Jews expelled reached 150,000; in that of Grodno 60,000, and in the kingdom of Poland it exceeded 200,000; and under what conditions did they have to leave house and home? They were packed in third or fourth class carriages, and kept there for days and sometimes weeks. In one carriage alone sixteen people were

ill with scarlet fever, others were attacked by typhus; some died after a short time, but the policemen who accompanied the train did not allow the bodies to be taken out to be buried. All these facts were told publicly in the Duma, together with many others just as scandalous. Is it to be wondered at that, in the presence of such injustice, the members belonging to the Opposition parties declared that they would do all that was humanly possible to induce the Sovereign to listen to the demands of public opinion, and to institute a responsible Ministry from which the nation would have the right to ask explanations concerning such deeds as dishonoured it and them in the eyes of Europe and the whole of the civilised world?

CHAPTER XVII.

A Wave of Reorganisation.

In giving the reader some idea of the fiery speeches which distinguished the short-lived session of the Duma, my intention has been to show their extreme seriousness in the sense that the country had awakened at last to its necessities, and meant earnestly to help the government; and, secondly, the absolute unimportance of the speeches from the point of view ascribed to them in the German press, though, indeed, Russia was very sick of its government.

On the other hand, the Romanoffs had never been so popular as they became after the outbreak of war. The Russian has strong common sense, and he could not fail to appreciate the terrible burden which Nicholas II. carried on his shoulders all through that anxious time. This, his kindness, and the many proofs of his solicitude for his army and his people won for him a national devotion. From the moment that he decided to assume the duties of Commander-in-Chief of his armies the tide of fortune and of war turned, and the German advance was stayed. Our Staff, left to its own initiative, worked better. The army knew where it stood. It had been told at last that it was not expected to take the offensive again until sufficient ammunition was available. It learned that every effort would be made to render the second winter campaign less terrible. The troops appreciated this, and felt grateful to the monarch who thus frankly told them the truth, and that he confidently relied on their devotion and their

spirit of self-sacrifice. It was his conviction, he said, that, no matter what the fury of the enemy might be, it was bound in the long run to collapse before the bravery of Russia's defenders and of Russia's Allies.

When the Germans assumed that our country was standing on the threshold of ruin, they were vastly mistaken. The country was going through the most terrible crisis that it had ever known, but it was undergoing it cheerfully, with faith and with hope in its heart, and its Sovereign had no appearance of being on the point of losing his throne as a consequence of the military reverses which had fallen upon him. His government, despised and hated as it was, could rely on the support of the nation, because the nation knew very well that the moment had not come when it might indulge in any manifestation of direct hostility, whatever it might do later on, when the war, with its attendant miseries and misfortunes, was ended with honour. The debates in the Duma certainly proved that the Ministers did not enjoy the confidence of the nation, but then in my country Ministers are thought very little of; it is only the Tsar who counts. An attack against the government does not mean in Russia what it would do in England or in France, where the Ministry is answerable to Parliament for its errors. The only thing that would matter would be an attack on the person of the Tsar, as in the case of Alexander II., the victim of Sophy Perovska and Ryssakoff.

Notwithstanding the heavy reverses which attended the first period of the war, not one voice in Russia was raised against Nicholas II., even when he made up his mind to prorogue the Duma. Indeed, as the campaign progressed, he became known to the nation at large, and the revelation drew him into closer contact with his people. To the army he became a living personality instead of the dreaded master he had always been represented. When his soldiers saw him bend over their sick beds, trying to

cheer the wounded with his words of sympathy, they grew to love him really as the "Little Father" they had before called him, more from habit than from anything else. The best proof of the truth of this assertion can be found in the perfect calm with which both the change in the commandership of the army and the prorogation of the Duma were received. Before these events happened, people had prophesied a multitude of misfortunes, should they ever be thought of, far less executed. But none of the things occurred. The country submitted to the will of its monarch; and the members of the Duma, when they returned to their homes all over the Empire, never said a word which might have revealed their rebellious feelings against the supreme authority. The committee appointed for the more effective mobilisation of industry and resources was composed of several members of both Houses of Legislature, and worked indefatigably. All the factories, great or small, were told to abandon private orders, and to confine themselves entirely and solely to the task of supplying the government and the army. The railways were compelled to accept only war materials and absolute necessaries for the existence of the population. Every attempt to strike was severely dealt with.

Only once in Petrograd a strike assumed a threatening attitude, and it was speedily quelled by the energetic measures of General Roussky. He issued a proclamation declaring that he relied on the willingness and on the good sense of the population of the capital not to disturb the public order, and to give the enemy no insight into internal dissensions at a time when there ought to be a strongly united Russia, determined to submit to any hardships or sacrifices provided the enemy was driven beyond its frontiers. For about six months this warning was repeated from time to time, always accompanied by the expression of a resolute will to enforce the decisions adopted by the Emperor with the concurrence of the whole

nation. Workmen were told by General Roussky that they had better beware of those who tried to influence them against complying with the orders of the government, as he was quite resolved to have them obeyed and respected. His determined attitude soon made itself felt, and when Christmas arrived the Russian army was at last supplied with all the ammunition which it required, in quantities which exceeded, said competent people, that of the Germans. The spring was going, no doubt, to bring with it great events.

The debates of the Duma did not sound the knell of the monarchy, as our enemies joyfully asserted, but it certainly is true that they struck a heavy blow at the system of government which had prevailed from time immemorial in Russia, and had paved the way for the institution of a really constitutional form of administration in which the responsibility of the Sovereign would be shared by his advisers, and himself delivered from the reproach of having taken measures or of having done things about which he knew nothing and understood very little.

One of the first things was to open new hospitals and to accelerate the transport of the wounded from the front. There the members of the Duma rendered great service, and considerably helped the Red Cross by their experience and by their knowledge of localities. Relief committees were also organised to help the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been compelled to flee before the invaders, and had lost all that they possessed in the world. In these two directions—the Red Cross and relief of distress—the Empress and her daughters worked indefatigably. Russia, though sorrowing for its defeats, did not weep over them.

The Press, too, modified its opinions more than once so as to save the government further embarrassment. Though it blamed vigorously the policy pursued by

M. Gorémykin, yet it remained, on the whole, tolerant of his line of conduct. A curious thing, however, occurred in that respect. The *Novoie Vremia*, which had always been considered as the organ of the government and of the extreme Right, and which had never lost an opportunity to attack the Liberal dailies, such as the *Retsch* and the *Courier* of Petrograd, suddenly published one of the most violent attacks on the administration that had ever appeared in a Russian newspaper. This attack was so remarkable and so unexpected that, in view of future events, I think it advisable to reproduce it here:

"Count Bobrinsky, who, not only among his own party, but everywhere in the country, enjoys the reputation of being an unusually sincere and honest man, spoke to-day in the Duma: 'I believe that the government does not realise its responsibilities in these painful and difficult times.' His words were warmly applauded by nearly the whole House, and if the country had been able to do so it would undoubtedly have joined its cheers to those of the deputies. It is time for the government to act seriously. Who does not suffer from the thought that at present this is not the case?

"Our country is a wonderfully rich one, with inexhaustible resources and strength. Our population exceeds two hundred millions. And what a population! One ready for any sacrifices, that does not mind any sufferings, that never loses its courage in the presence of the heaviest defeats. We have got everything: the wish to win the war, the simple heroism of our soldiers, patience and courage, together with an unbounded love for our Fatherland. There is only one thing which we lack, and that is a government capable of tackling a grave situation. In the present terrible times in Russia, heroes on the Ministerial benches are wanted just as much as in the trenches. We require Ministers capable of understanding that they must give

to Russia something new. New words must be heard, new deeds must be done, out of which may spring a new era for our beloved country."

This article produced a deep impression, and more than one person declared that it had been inspired by a statesman, now retired, who bore an undying grudge against M. Gorémykin. True or not, the article passed apparently unnoticed by the censor, and also by the Ministry of the Interior, generally so unforgiving in all cases where personalities of Ministers were attacked. Abroad, it was interpreted in a way which produced an unfortunate impression. In reality, this unwarranted attack was caused by a purely mercenary desire on the part of the *Novoie Vremia* to have removed certain restrictions connected with questions of transport.

In the meanwhile the Commission which had been appointed to inquire into the needs of the army and the making of munitions, dependent on co-operation of private industry, had been formed, and its first sitting in the Winter Palace was honoured by the presence of the Sovereign. The Commission sat for some days. It was followed by a Congress of all the Russian municipalities which met at Moscow, and at which some remarkable speeches were heard; these would not have been out of place in the English House of Commons, and proved that Russia was getting used to parliamentary affairs. But before the last-mentioned Congress had assembled M. Gorémykin had undertaken a journey to the Headquarters of the army, where the Emperor was at that time, and advised him (as we have already said) to prorogue the Duma on the pretext that, after it had voted the financial and other Bills, it had nothing more to do.

None of the Ministers shared M. Gorémykin's opinion. Indeed, two amongst them, Prince Scherbatov, whose advice counted for very little, and M. Krivocheine, whose

judgments were always very much thought of, and who enjoyed a great authority all over the country, as well as a considerable reputation as a moderate and far-seeing statesman, refused to associate themselves with the measure, and went so far as to threaten to resign if the Prime Minister did not reconsider his decision. Their protestations, however, as we know, availed nothing, because, when M. Gorémykin had once made up his mind, it was not easy to bring him round to another opinion. He considered the Duma as a mischievous institution, and he dreaded the effect which its debates might have on those who read them without knowing what lay behind. He used all his personal influence with the Tsar, and at last persuaded him to decree the prorogation from the 3rd (16th) of September until the following November.

In Petrograd rumours to the effect that such a measure was in contemplation had been in vogue for some time. On the very eve of the day when the Emperor's Ukase was published, the Press had pleaded for the Duma to continue. The *Novoie Vremia*, in one of its leaders, declared that it could not bring itself to believe in the possibility of such a thing taking place at a time when the hopes of the whole nation were centred in the Duma. All these warnings proved absolutely unavailing to M. Gorémykin, and the Duma was sent home.

In the meanwhile what was the army doing? German rumours declared that it was demoralised and destroyed, whilst even among the Allies of Russia serious misgivings were felt as to its safety. The army was trying to regain its strength, and had succeeded so far in avoiding a decisive battle for which the lack of ammunition rendered all its courage unavailing. The new Chief of the Staff, General Alexiev, an old and experienced officer, proceeded with as much caution as General Januschkievitch, his predecessor, had shown carelessness and disregard for lives which he had squandered. In his report to the Emperor,

after the latter had assumed the supreme command, he drew the monarch's attention to the necessity of giving some rest to the exhausted troops, and they were sent into positions where it was certain the Germans could not follow for some time to come. The Emperor started on a journey all along the front, accompanied for the first time by the young heir to the throne, whom it was deemed advisable to present to the army. The journey was made very simply, and never did the honest, straightforward nature of the Sovereign show to better advantage than in those days when he reviewed his soldiers and accompanied them himself to the very line of battle. The presence of their beloved Tsar was the best reward which his faithful soldiers could have expected, and it is certain that, from the day when he had decided to appeal personally to them, the progress of the German hordes came to an end, at least in that region surrounding Riga to which they had attached so much importance, and which they had boasted they could take whenever they pleased.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Moscow Congress.

The Congress met in Moscow, immediately after the prorogation of the Duma, to discuss the various points connected with the national defence of the country, and was the first of its kind which had taken place in Russia. It was composed of members of all the Zemstvos, or local administrative Assemblies, and of representatives of all the municipalities of the Empire. It had no political tendencies; one of its most influential members, indeed, when questioned on the subject by a journalist, replied that the Congress had not assembled to waste time by talking politics, but to see what could be done to put matters on a sound basis throughout the country in order that victory could be absolutely assured. It was true that a few deputies from the Caucasus had declared that they meant to claim an immediate appeal to the nation on behalf of Labour, but the majority of the Congress disavowed politics.

The Assembly was opened by Prince Lvoff, the leader of one of the Liberal parties of the Duma, who spoke of how, from the very beginning of the war, when it became evident that Russia was faced with difficulties which the government unaided would be unable to tackle, the members of the various Zemstvos set to work to aid in the struggle. "You have surely not forgotten how," continued the Prince, "during the early days of the campaign, we came forward, timidly and modestly at first, with our offers to take part in the task of succouring the

sick and wounded. If you compare these efforts with all that is now accomplished, you will find that we have made considerable progress in the matter of public activity. We began by working in the hospitals, and to-day our services are accepted everywhere—in the trenches as well as in the ambulances, in the commissariat and railway departments, at the War Office and in the Artillery Commission we have identified ourselves with our brave army. This war has become essentially a popular one, a national one, such as we have never fought since we became an independent and great nation. The eyes of all Russia are sympathetically turned toward the front, where our valiant troops are struggling and dying with such heroism.

"When I say this, I have particularly in my mind our retreat of the other day. This retreat is not that of a vanquished army. It is a retreat such as the world has never yet seen. It is an immense sacrifice which only a people like the Russians could perform, and such as could only have been possible in a country like Russia. It is not only the army who is fighting the terrible foe, it is Russia itself. This war has changed all the conditions of our existence: it has put an end to all differences of race and of creed; it has made new laws. Life and its exigencies are more powerful law-makers than those written by human hands. It makes laws of its own, and seeks their fulfilment in the hearts of men—in their intelligence, in their feelings of mercy and kindness. Insensibly we find that we have begun to live a new existence, such as we had not considered possible, and that we are confronted by social problems difficult to solve. The war has brought new-found energy to us all, but we ought not to blind ourselves to the fact that increased responsibilities will be imposed upon us. We must not lose faith in our own strength nor in our beloved land. The heavy trials which have fallen on Russia do not frighten or discourage her.

We have been compelled to retreat, have been beaten, and we are well aware of it; but Russia is not thinking of peace, and she will never conclude peace until she has routed her enemies so completely that nothing will be left to them except an appeal to her mercy.

"This conviction, however, ought not to make us forget that the whole future of our country depends not only on the issue of the war, but also on the after effects. Our native land not only requires the re-establishment of its former peaceful existence, but also its reorganisation. From the throne we have heard words exhorting us to remain united in the hour of trial, and the whole of Russia has responded to them. Now we are more than ever convinced of this fact. Like a ray of light in a dark place, the debates in the Duma have led us to the only possible path which Russia can take if she wants to follow the historical traditions that have made her strong and great in the past. Under these circumstances we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the earnest wish of the nation to be allowed to work hand in hand with the government has not been granted, but it has neither been crushed nor defeated. On the contrary, it has found itself strengthened by apparent failure.

"We must give proofs that we are possessed of indomitable courage, and remember that it is not the government that is leading this war, but the country. If the government wants to separate itself from the nation, then the Duma must be allowed to take her part in the general burden. For this reason we must make every possible effort to induce those in whose hands the decision rests to call the Duma together again, and to permit it to resume its useful labours."

When he had finished his speech Prince Lvoff called upon the special delegate of the Zemstvos, who at the same time was also a member of the Duma, M. Demidov,

to describe what he had seen in the trenches of Lithuania and Courland; whence he had just returned. M. Demidov related his experiences at some length, and expressed his firm conviction that, notwithstanding our defeats, our army would win the war. But in order to secure this victory a vigorous effort was necessary on the part of the whole nation to furnish the troops with badly needed armaments and ammunition.

A few other speeches were made, all in the same vein, and then the framing of several resolutions embodying the wishes and the opinions of the Congress was proceeded with. A deputy belonging to the Progressive party proposed an address to the Sovereign in which all that was going on in the country would be recited. The Congress agreed to his proposal, and decided that such an address should be presented to the Emperor by a commission of ten.

After this the Congress proceeded to nominate a commission to care for the host of refugees who were already beginning to invade the whole of the Empire, and to control the factories where munitions were being prepared. Fifty members of the different municipal councils in Russia were included in this commission. Further, it was decided to proceed before the winter season to the building of new provisional hospitals, a measure which was urgently required, as the difficulty of dealing with the numbers of wounded who were being sent back from the front was increasing every day. After a few more remarks the Congress was brought to a close; but when its delegates asked for an audience with the Sovereign to lay before him the address it had been decided to present to him, Nicholas II. refused to see or hear them.

I have mentioned the speech of Prince Lvoff, as it was indicative of the real feelings of the country. This feeling was officially stifled after the prorogation of the Duma, and the Press was prosecuted for every attempt that it

made to give publicity to the complaints which privately were poured into every ear willing to listen. The government seemed determined to silence every expression of discontent or even of uneasiness concerning the future and the fate of the war. But—and this certainly must be put to its credit—it encouraged unofficially all those who found themselves desirous or ready to contribute their share to the national defence.

The fact was that the government was in a dilemma. On the one hand, it knew very well that it could not fulfil its duty in regard to the country without availing itself of the help of those vital forces of the nation which alone could strengthen and reconcile Russia to the terrible sacrifices it was expected to make. On the other hand, the government considered it a real danger to allow people to talk about what was going on in the country, and especially about what was taking place in the army. The stupid hallucination that no defeat was ever to be acknowledged was still guiding M. Gorémykin and his colleagues, and they could not be brought to realise that this absence of news often gave rise to the most foolish and the most absurd rumours, and exaggerated into disasters what sometimes were nothing but small reverses.

The prorogation of the Duma did not, however, put an end to the political agitation in the country. On the contrary, the different parties whose members had not left Petrograd held party sittings, where it was decided to strengthen what was called the Progressive Block, a party composed of the moderate elements of the Right, who did not approve of the reactionary policy inaugurated by M. Gorémykin, Liberals, Progressives, Nationalists, and several other small parties of the Duma. These all determined to unite their forces and to form a strong opposition to every governmental attempt to rule independently the Houses of Legislature. Before the prorogation the Progressives had already tried to impress the Duma; but

partly because it was not fully organised and partly because the government had not treated it seriously, it had failed to make any headway in the Assembly, notwithstanding the fact that it had among its members men like M. Konowalov, who had been for some time Vice-President of the Duma, and who enjoyed a great reputation among the financial and commercial circles of Moscow. M. Efremov also, whose vast experience in matters of internal administration had earned him a considerable authority in the whole country, was of the party. Now, however, when the prorogation of the Duma had put an end to open political discussions, and when it became necessary to organise in view of the future, the Progressive party acquired quite an exceptional importance; it was the only one that framed a political programme, which it did not hesitate to present to the government, calling upon it to recognise the party if it wanted to recover the popularity and the authority which it had lost everywhere and over everybody in Russia.

This programme, which very probably will one day be adopted in its broad lines, even if its details are not considered acceptable, comprised the following points:

(1) An amnesty for past political offences, and the recovery of the civil rights which condemnation had forfeited.

(2) The return to their former homes of all the people exiled without trial to Siberia, or other far-away provinces for political or religious motives.

(3) A complete abandonment of every kind of religious persecution, and the return to the order of things established by the Emperor's Ukase of the 17th of April, 1905, concerning liberty of conscience, which latterly had been ignored by the government.

(4) Immediate autonomy to Poland.

(5) The abrogation of the laws concerning the Jews, with equal liberties to those enjoyed by all Russian citizens.

(6) A policy of conciliation in regard to Finland.

(7) Permission for the Press in Little Russia to exist under the same conditions as everywhere else in the Empire.

(8) The quashing of all the prosecutions begun against different members of the labour party, and the right of that party to organise and hold meetings.

(9) Common action by the government and the country to bring about the necessary reforms required by the nation. (After which was given the list of reforms advocated ; it is far too long to be reproduced here.)

It must be admitted that this programme offered nothing that might not have been accepted by the government had it only wished to effect a reconciliation with the Duma. Though no one believes it, I am inclined to think that M. Gorémykin, if properly managed and not rubbed the wrong way by his enemies and detractors, might have shown himself more conciliatory than people expected.

While all this was going on there was, both in Petrograd and the provinces, a constant increase in the cost of living. People were suffering everywhere, and more perhaps in the capital than anywhere else, from the impossibility of procuring either for love or for money, bread, sugar, meat, and those things without which it was almost impossible to exist. It is not that there was any shortage of them in Russia. On the contrary, provisions could have been found in plenty, but the means of transport failed. The administration of the railway system was abominable, all the wagons or trucks were occupied either with ammunition to be forwarded to the front, or with wounded being brought back to base hospitals, or again with Jews being taken from one end of the empire to the other. No one had any thought for provisions, and prices rose to such an alarming extent that the people rebelled, and women of the lower classes broke the windows of the bakers and butchers, and plundered the shops. Then arose another trouble, the absence of small change. All the copper and

silver pieces in general use disappeared in a quite wonderful manner, no one seemed to be able to change a five-rouble note. The government tried to remedy this state of things by creating paper money in the form of stamps ranging in values of five, ten, and fifteen copecks. These the Imperial bank accepted as money, but the cab drivers and small traders did not take so kindly to this innovation, and unpleasant scenes took place which had to be repressed. All these circumstances put together created great discontent, which did not improve the general conditions in the Russian Empire.

But in the army matters were different. Soldiers began to receive rifles, guns, and ammunition, and an offensive on a small scale even took place in Volhynia, where our troops defeated the Germans on the opposite side of the Styr, and entrenched themselves in new positions, which they held with great courage for several months. Engagements of more or less importance used to take place daily in those regions, and were claimed as victories by each side.

The Germans had begun at that time their movement southward, which sent the army commanded by Marshal von Mackensen down to Serbia, and they had no longer the large forces which they had been able to mass against us before the fall of Vilna. They also had to stick to the positions which they had contrived to defend against the Russian rearguards, but the latter nevertheless advanced a few miles toward Galicia. The town of Minsk, which had already been considered as lost, was successfully delivered from a German attack. The enemy retired in good order towards Pinsk, but they did not attempt to cross the marshes.

Their whole efforts seemed then to be concentrated on the Riga sector. This town had been evacuated, and all its factories closed and dismantled by order of the government. Very few of its inhabitants had remained,

and it appeared quite a dead city, which was considered as doomed. To the general surprise, the Germans did not seem to make any effort to advance, notwithstanding their earlier boasting. The Russians had entrenched themselves near Dwinsk so thoroughly that even Marshal von Hindenburg did not care to exposé his troops to the dangers of an attack which might not have proved successful. The two adversaries remained in the same positions watching each other, and trying vainly to guess each other's intentions. In the meanwhile, winter was approaching, the first frosts had taken place, and the first snow had fallen, much earlier than usual, as if Providence had intervened in favour of our army, because the fierceness of a Russian winter is much harder to bear for those who are not used to it.

Such, then, was the general situation; the discouragement which at one time had weighed so heavily upon the spirits of Russian society was beginning to give way to a more hopeful, more contented frame of mind. The troops too, were also getting over the effects of the defeats which had caused them so much anger and so much despair. Ammunition was coming plentifully at last, together with other war materials, warm clothing, and numerous requisites which the army had not had before. The soldiers were already beginning to talk about the defeats which they were going to inflict upon their adversaries, and somehow a hopeful feeling was beginning to find its way amidst all the sadness which had fallen like a heavy cloud over the whole of Russia. The nation had made up its mind to another winter's campaign, was even longing for it, as it was to be the precursor of a summer in which Russia would begin to reap the fruit of all the sacrifices which had been borne so bravely and so manfully. It was at this precise moment that a new misfortune arrived—Bulgaria turned traitor, and, forgetting all that Russia had done for it, passed over to the enemy.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Treason of Bulgaria.

The fact that Bulgaria threw in her lot at last with Germany was not viewed in Russia with great surprise. Public opinion had expected that something of the kind would happen ever since King Ferdinand had begun to exhibit his German sympathies and to turn a deaf ear to the advice which the Allies had tried to give him. Relations between the cabinets of Petrograd and of Sofia had been strained by the Balkan wars, when Serbia had won in Russia the sympathies which, by her conduct, Bulgaria had lost.

M. Sazonov hoped against hope that wisdom would prevail among the Bulgarian politicians, and that even if the King were determined to throw in his lot with that of the German States and with Austria-Hungary, the secular enemy of the Slav cause, his advisers and ministers would not allow him to embark on such a suicidal policy. Unfortunately these hopes proved entirely false, partly on account of the weak diplomacy of the Russian representative at the court of Sofia, M. Savinsky, who was anything but a statesman, and who instead of giving his whole attention to the difficult political situation of Bulgaria preferred spending his time playing tennis and flirting with fair ladies. He had been a great favourite in his circle at Petrograd, where he had taken himself much too seriously, and at Stockholm, previous to his appointment in Sofia, he had been greatly petted by society. He was absolutely no match for King Ferdinand, who did not

even consider it a triumph to hoodwink him. By the disquieting reports which M. Savinsky sent to his immediate chiefs, he lured them on to a false security that allowed the crafty Coburger to commit treason the moment he thought he could do so without risk.

It would be difficult to find a more mismanaged affair than the Balkan crisis. Bulgaria ought to have been persuaded into accepting the conditions offered to her, instead of being merely irritated. Action should have been taken instead of letting things drift until it became impossible to improve them, or to remedy the decisions taken by the unscrupulous ruler of an unscrupulous people. But the Russian Foreign Office always kept a latent feeling of kindness for Bulgaria, and never quite realised that all its efforts to win her as an ally had not only failed, but had had the opposite influence. Bulgaria did not care any longer for Russia; it is to be doubted whether she had ever cared for her at all. Bulgaria was ambitious; Bulgaria had dreams about Constantinople, which she considered as her future possession, and knowing that Russia would prove a serious rival for her in that direction, she aspired to liberate herself from any obligations in regard to her old patron, whom she began to hate as events unfolded themselves in the Near East, with a hatred the more ferocious that it was absolutely unjustified. Russian influence, which in spite of official opinion in Petrograd had never been firmly established in Bulgaria, and which, in his brief day of power, Prince Alexander of Battenberg had attempted to shake off, was quite dead when the Great War began; the Turk had far more chance to be listened to at Sofia than M. Sazonov.

Nevertheless, there existed still in Petrograd enthusiastic though weak-minded people who could not reconcile themselves to the accomplished facts of Bulgaria's misdeeds. It was partly due to this foolish faction that a considerable portion of Russian society felt that we

ought not to draw the sword against those Slav brethren, or *bratouschki*, whom, earlier, we had delivered from the Turkish yoke.

To many, therefore, the treason of Bulgaria, bound as she ought to have been by the closest ties of gratitude, came as a shock; but the majority, who had seen it coming, declared that, after all, it was a thousand times preferable to have an avowed foe than to run the risk of being betrayed by a false friend.

This, however, was poor consolation in the face of the fact that the alliance of Bulgaria with Germany and with Turkey would assure the direct communication of these two powers with each other, and thus add considerably to the already numerous difficulties with which the Allies were finding themselves confronted in the Balkans. Some people said that it would perhaps have been more judicious on the part of Russia not to have issued its ultimatum to King Ferdinand until he had thrown off his mask and spontaneously announced his intentions of becoming untrue to all the promises which he had made. All the same, considering the dignity of a great country like Russia, it could hardly have been expected that she would remain quiet under provocations which were as insolent as they were disgraceful.

King Ferdinand acted throughout with that hypocrisy in which he had always shown himself a master. He began by saying that he had done all that lay within his power to remain upon good terms with the Russian government, but that the bulk of the Bulgarian nation, being opposed to Russia, were not going to continue to be bullied by the latter country, as had been the case lately. He therefore found himself compelled to submit to the wishes of his people. He also considerately added that he was convinced the Central Powers would be victorious, and so he could not pursue any other policy, an avowal which had at least the merit of being perfectly frank, a thing

that must have astonished Ferdinand himself, so little used was he to tell the truth.

It was about this time that an event happened which, though it took place abroad, caused considerable perturbation in Petrograd, and some apprehensions throughout Russia in general—the resignation of M. Delcassé. He had made a considerable number of friends in the Russian capital, where all had learned to appreciate his tact and great political knowledge, and had looked up to him to direct French foreign affairs till the end of the war. His resignation was as sudden as it was unexpected. We knew too well that it would be wrongly interpreted abroad by the enemies of the Allies, and represented to have been caused by his despair at the turn the war was taking. The resignation was sincerely deplored in Petrograd, Rome and London, and urgent representations were made to him to reconsider his decision, but they all proved useless, and he persisted in his determination. Perhaps he had a far more earnest motive than was suspected by the general public. M. Delcassé was a stronger and cleverer man than he was given credit for. He had guessed that when the time came for peace terms to be discussed it would be indispensable that it should be done by men who had not been absolute partisans in the war, and that for many reasons he would have far greater chances then of being heard than if he had remained in office the whole of the war. This at least is what was believed by some persons who knew him well, and I will quote here a letter which I received very soon after his departure from the Quai d'Orsay, and which was written by a man of standing in Paris, who was one of the best informed in France as to politics and political men in that country.

"You will have been astonished," he wrote to me, "at the decision of our friend Delcassé to bid good-bye to political life and to the cares of office at a period of

crisis such as the present. To his friends he said that his health had become indifferent; to his enemies he said nothing, and allowed them to make what deductions they pleased. He seems, however, to be as well as ever, and certainly has lost none of his interest in political matters. I had a long talk with him the other day, and I believe I can make a pretty good guess as to what has occurred and to what is actually passing in his mind. The war will prove a much longer affair than could ever have been supposed in the first moments of enthusiasm which followed upon its declaration. We have at last understood that it is not so easy to reach Berlin as we had fondly imagined, and that even our friends the Cossacks will take some time over it. It would have been impossible for any ministry in this beautiful and splendid France of ours to live until the end of the present struggle. Delcassé, whose ambitions are as great as ever, but whose patriotism is stronger even than his ambitions, understands all this perfectly, and, feeling himself able to render further services to his country, wants to reserve his activity for the moment when it will be time to claim compensation for the past, and to sow seeds for the future in the shape of a treaty of peace capable of reconciling us to the sacrifices which we have made, the money which we have spent, and the blood which we have spilt. I think events will prove that this supposition of mine is correct, and that you will yet see our friend resume his activity and become of valuable help to those who will be called upon to write their names at the bottom of the most important treaty of peace the world will ever have seen."

My correspondent was perhaps not so badly informed, but, of course, his point of view could not be shared by the world at large, who could only judge of events on the surface, and the departure of M. Delcassé was deplored sincerely in Petrograd.

In Russia, too, changes took place at about the same time. Weak, amiable, and inexperienced Prince Scherbatov, who, with the best intentions in the world, had only succeeded in making himself ridiculous, returned to private life a sadder and perhaps a wiser man. He left behind him the reputation of having throughout behaved as a gentleman, which is more than can be said of some Russian functionaries, and though he was not regretted his departure was deplored by some people who said that very probably Russia would gain nothing by change in the conduct of her home affairs.

The Prince's successor was a man reputed as a violent reactionary, M. Khvostov, the namesake of the Minister of Justice, to whom, however, he was not related. Formerly he had been governor at Nijni Novgorod, where he was known as a supporter of police methods, averse to every manifestation of public opinion, an enemy of the liberty of the Press. He was a typical *Tchinownik*, a term used for a public functionary who believes that the very fact of his being in power allows him to despise others and to make all his subordinates feel the weight of his fist. By what means M. Khvostov had contrived to draw upon himself the protection of M. Gorémykin has not yet been ascertained, but that he had succeeded in becoming one of the favourites of the old statesman was a fact of which the world was soon to become cognisant. The appointment of M. Khvostov had one peculiarity about it; he was the first member of the Duma who had been called upon to occupy a public office, and therefore his nomination as Minister of the Interior was of great significance, the more so that he at once declared his intention of not resigning his membership of the Duma, but of keeping in touch with his colleagues. This announcement mitigated a little of the consternation caused by the news that he had been entrusted with the delicate office of Minister of the Interior, which had always been considered

to be the most important post in the government. Wise people shook their heads, and declared that the appointment boded no good to the Liberal elements in the country, and that probably M. Khvostov would use his knowledge of the ins and outs of the Duma to preach the necessity of dispensing with its services. Contrary to expectations, he showed great tact, considerable inclination to consult competent people upon various questions, and, in an interview which he had with a group of newspaper representatives, he impressed them most favourably. Indeed, M. Khvostov contrived to dissipate a good many of the prejudices which existed against him, and to give the idea that he ought to be allowed a chance of proving what he could do. He had expressed himself as desirous of seeing the Duma resume its sittings, and this, of course, was sure to win him some sympathies even from his opponents; it remained to be seen whether his conduct was to prove the truth of the time-honoured proverb about new brooms.

There was, however, one phrase in the communication M. Khvostov made to the Press which was considered most ominous. In speaking about the resolutions passed in Moscow during the Congress to which I have already alluded, he declared they were the result of extreme nervousness on the part of those who had voted them, and who lacked a sufficiently deep understanding of the gravity and seriousness of the situation. After all, too, he argued these resolutions had no real importance, because neither the Zemstvos nor the municipal councils possessed the power which alone counted, that is physical and material power. These words could not fail to raise considerable apprehensions as to the intentions of the new Minister. Perhaps the actuating motive for such opinions would have been examined more carefully if the news arriving from Serbia and from the Balkans had not absorbed public attention to the exclusion of every other subject. The

heroic defence of the brave Serbian army excited the pity and the admiration of the whole of Russia. Between the Austrians on the one side and the Bulgarians on the other, and the steadfast attack and advance of the German army led by von Mackensen, the position of the unfortunate Serbians was desperate indeed, and one could only wonder by what miracle they could still hold out.

The Greek question also was causing trouble and anxiety; and altogether the position in the Balkans seemed to have assumed a most grave character, one of the worst features being the possibilities of new surprises every day coming from the most unexpected quarters. With a man like King Ferdinand treason was a matter of indifference, and he could with perfect equanimity try to win the friendship of those whom he had reviled a few days before. A man who knew him well, and who happened to have been at Sofia while negotiations were still going on between the Bulgarian government and Serbia, wrote to me as follows on his return :

" My journey has been a most interesting one, but I am not at all sorry it has come to an end. Bulgaria is not a nice country to live in at the present moment. One has all the time the feeling that one is allowed to exist on sufferance, and that the inhabitants of this land look upon one with the eyes of a crocodile about to swallow the victim he has been watching for a long time. King Ferdinand is surely meditating some big *coup* from which he probably hopes to obtain at last supremacy over the whole of the Balkan Peninsula, an ambition he has had ever since his acceptance of the Bulgarian throne. It was a tremendous mistake not to oblige Serbia to concede everything her neighbour asked from her, rather than furnish Bulgaria with a pretext for joining the ranks of her enemies. The idea that it would have been useless because Ferdinand would always have remained the tool

of Austria was a perfectly foolish one. First of all, Ferdinand has never been the tool of anybody, or of anything, save perhaps of his own ambition. He has absolutely no sympathies for Austria, or for Francis Joseph, who more than once has humiliated him, and made him feel that they had nothing in common. He hates Russia just as much, and tolerates Germany and its Kaiser simply because it seems to him that from that quarter he may expect the most. The great strength of the man consists in his knowledge of his own importance at this moment of crisis, when his going over to one side or to the other means so much to those with whom he chooses to throw in his lot. His uncommon cuteness makes him realise that where two quarrel then is the opportunity for a third party to take what he considers his own, and to get what he wants: Ferdinand certainly does not belong to the people who miss their opportunities. He has been preparing himself all along for the part he means to play now, and he has contrived to assure himself of the co-operation of many influential persons in Bulgaria, who from quite different motives from his own would like to get rid of Russian influence and Russia's constant interference in the affairs of their country and of the Balkan Peninsula. Being perfectly aware that it is highly improbable that Russia will be allowed to take Constantinople, he would like to be the one personage indicated to supplant the Sultan on that throne of ancient Byzantium which he has coveted ever since he set foot on Bulgarian soil.

"With quite an artistic touch King Ferdinand has slowly fomented an intense distrust against Russia amongst his subjects, and persuaded them that Russia, instead of having their interests at heart, is aspiring to put one of her Grand Dukes in the Palace of Sofia, and to make Bulgaria a Russian province. The idea, of course, is a most distasteful one, and Ferdinand has found in it one of his best pretexts for persuading his ignorant and

unsuspicious people that it would be to their advantage to join the Central Powers in their struggle against the Allies. His excellent argument for enforcing his opinions has been to put into prison all those who ventured to question them or to challenge their sincerity. Sofia swarms with spies, who keep the government informed of all the persons whose influence might be exercised against the king and his schemes. I can assure you that though King Ferdinand received me, and asked me to dinner, and showed himself most gracious toward me—in memory of the past, I suppose—yet I was not at all sure when I went to bed that I might not be wakened during the night by gendarmes come to arrest me, and I heaved a deep sigh of relief when I had crossed the Bulgarian frontier. Nothing that can happen in that land of surprises will astonish me, and even if Ferdinand decided to pass over to the enemy, and to put his army at the disposal of Germany, this would not mean at all that he could not change his mind at the eleventh hour, because after he had started on the war path he might, if the allurement proved sufficiently strong to tempt him, invoke that conscience of which he has made such profitable use, and explain to his subjects that he had convinced himself the Allies were in the right. No man alive has ever practised better than he has done the art of forgetting his resolutions of the day before in favour of his sympathies of the next."

There was certainly a good deal in what my correspondent wrote, and it is most likely that if the Russian Foreign Office had been a little more tactful, Bulgaria's neutrality might have been secured. M. Sazonov, however, was far too honest to promise what he did not intend or mean to grant. Rather than compromise himself by negotiations which might have been interpreted in a false light, he preferred to send the ultimatum to the Bulgarian government which resulted in the rupture of diplomatic

relations between Petrograd and Sofia. Very soon afterwards the Tsar announced to his faithful subjects that the Bulgaria which we had created and delivered from the Turkish yoke had turned traitor to us, and joined the ranks of our enemies.

The great question which followed upon this announcement was how to get to the help of Serbia before the latter country had been entirely annihilated by the combined Austrian and German armies. The formidable von Mackensen, who had been sent down to the Balkans in the greatest haste and secrecy, had set to work with his usual thoroughness, and very soon the Serbians, driven back everywhere, had to fly to the Albanian mountains, whilst King Peter and the Crown Prince Alexander were compelled to abandon Nish, which was stormed by the Bulgarian troops, and to seek a refuge in Montenegro.

Whilst these events were taking place, the Allies were landing as many men as they could at Salonica, but were confronted by new difficulties coming from Greece. The war was beginning once more to assume a character more favourable to our enemies than it had done for the last three months, and it was also getting more and more agonising, owing to the suspense which it entailed on all those who were immediately concerned. For Russians the fact of having to fight against Slav brethren was inexpressibly bitter and painful. It added a new horror to all those already experienced; but hard as it was to draw the sword to punish people with whom one had believed most sincerely that one would always remain on brotherly and affectionate terms, awful as it seemed to find that one's own familiar friend had turned false, the moral disaster did not destroy the confidence which Russia felt as to the ultimate issue of the war. That war had to be won, even if the struggle lasted ten years, even if it extended to a whole century. The German tyrant had to be crushed, German arrogance had to be destroyed.

At this moment retired from public life M. Krivocheïne, one of the foremost political men in Russia, a real and great statesman, who during the ten years he had remained in office had won for himself universal respect and esteem. It was thought that M. Krivocheïne had retired for the same reasons that had induced M. Delcassé to give up his post, or possibly because he could not reconcile himself to the views which the President of the Council of Ministers had expressed and meant to carry through. His departure, which at any time would have produced considerable sensation, startled the whole of Russia, and caused it to wonder whether there did not lie behind it some grave motive which it was not deemed expedient for the public to learn. Probably nothing of the kind existed, but it was a thousand pities that such a supposition had arisen.

CHAPTER XX

RUSSIA AT BAY

A CAREFULLY fostered German legend circulated in Russia, where it was believed by the credulous and not wholly rejected by more responsible people, was that the Prussians captured at Kovno, Grodno, and Novo Georgiewsk an incredible amount of war material. It is true that quite a number of guns and rifles were scattered about in all these places, but they were mostly out-of-date types which had filled the arsenals, but which were not fit for modern use. Everything that was valuable in the way of ammunition and guns was either removed or destroyed. Had the Russians possessed all that their enemies declared had been captured they would have been able to make a good resistance, and certainly would not have allowed their adversaries so easily to storm the strongholds.

It has now been proved that the great successes of the German armies during the first twelve months of the campaign were mostly due to the sad but certain fact that the Russian troops found themselves not only hampered but seriously endangered in their movements by this deplorable want of war materials, and especially of shells and small ammunition. In Galicia and in Poland batteries had to remain silent for weeks whilst the enemy fired at them uninterruptedly with heavy artillery. The soldiers in the trenches used to lie down and bite the earth in their despair at finding themselves compelled to remain where they were, without means to reply to the murderous attacks to which they were subjected.

In the month of July things changed very quickly. The country at last understood what was expected and required from it, and set to its task with joy and alacrity. Every factory in the empire was working, and the Siberian railway line having been mobilised, and ordered to refuse private goods, used all its resources to bring over guns, shells, and rifles from Japan, and from America via Vladivostock. The Russian workmen, to encourage the soldiers, used to write of their own accord on each case of ammunition they sent off, "Don't spare them, we are making more for you." In an incredibly short time our troops found themselves not only supplied with what they required for the moment, but also cheered by the prospect of never again having to suffer from the evils to which they, as well as public opinion, ascribed the reverses which had thrown the whole of Russia into mourning.

The Emperor was taking his share in the general burden, and since he had assumed the command over the whole of the army did not spare himself in his efforts of encouragement. He inspected the front everywhere, and went about from one place to another, not allowing a single spot where he knew his soldiers were standing face to face with their adversary to escape his attention. After a stay of a few days on the Galician border he started for Riga and Reval, against which the German efforts had been particularly directed ever since the fall of Grodno. He arrived in Reval on the 10th of November, 1915, accompanied by his small son, whose presence at his side seemed to afford him great pleasure. He at once drove to inspect the fortifications of the town and its citadel, after which he proceeded to the harbour, and received the English and Russian naval officers composing the crews of the submarines anchored there. To the British sailors he expressed his pleasure at being able to greet them, and thanked them for their splendid services, and decorated two English submarine commanders with the Cross of

St. George. After a hasty lunch taken in the Imperial train which had brought the Sovereign and his suite to the station, the Tsar went to the big Russo-Baltic factory, the largest works of their kind in Russia, and having examined the work which was being done there, talked with the workmen, inquired from them the details of what they were doing, and thanked them in his name and that of the army for their services. A long visit to all the different hospitals of the town ended the day, and the monarch left the same evening for Riga.

In the old Baltic capital Nicholas II. was received by the commander of the fortress and garrison, General Radko Dmitriev, who during the whole Galician campaign had behaved like a hero. This brave officer was a Bulgarian who had distinguished himself by his courage during the two Balkan wars, and had entered the Russian service immediately after the second, not caring to remain in Sofia, where his Russian sympathies had gained the enmity of King Ferdinand. The Emperor reviewed the several army corps entrusted with the defence of Riga, who received him with an indescribable enthusiasm. Among the troops massed for the purpose was one of the Siberian detachments whose courage had become traditional in the whole army. Having called the officers to him, Nicholas II. addressed them :

"I am glad to see here the valiant representatives of my famous Siberian regiments, which have distinguished themselves so much during the two campaigns. I feel happy to have been enabled to come here with the heir to the throne to thank you for your faithful services and the heroic conduct of your regiments. Tell them that I send them my best greetings and hopes that they will vanquish our formidable foes."

After tremendous hurrahs and cheers from all sides the Sovereign was driven to the principal hospitals, where

he spoke with the wounded and medical attendants, and everywhere expressed his conviction that better days were to dawn for Russia. He left Riga about midnight, and after a short stay at Witebsk, where he inspected a division just returned from the front and a brigade of artillery, he proceeded nearer the advanced lines held by our troops.

The visit of the Emperor to Riga produced a great impression everywhere. People had been so convinced that it was but a question of days for this town to fall into German hands, that the fact that it had been found possible for the Tsar to go there could not fail to reassure those timorous souls. The feeling of insecurity which for months had pervaded the whole atmosphere of the Baltic provinces was dissipated, and though the fact that von Hindenburg still held several points in Courland could not be denied, yet it seemed a great thing that he had not been able to make any progress in the direction of Riga, the possession of which always had been coveted by Germany. Public life, which had been almost extinct in the Baltic capital, began to revive, and people came back to the homes which they had left in a hurry under the impression that the Prussian advanced patrols were within sight. Security returned with a hope that things might turn out better than had been expected. In that sense the Imperial visit did a great amount of good, and it was certainly a most happy thought which had prompted it.

The serious sense of duty that was always such a remarkable feature in the character of Nicholas II. induced him to do a still more magnificent thing. In spite of the protestations of his entourage and of the personal danger which such an enterprise presented, he determined to go to where actual fighting was in progress, and to cheer his brave troops in the hour of their trial; accompanied by his son, he paid a visit to the Headquarters of the

armies commanded by Generals Broussiloff, Scherbascheff, and Levitsky, the last being stationed in trenches in the neighbourhood of Tarnopol, the only Galician town still left in our possession. General Broussiloff's troops were first inspected. The Emperor, who was accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief of the combined Southern armies, General Ivanov, then took his seat in a motor car, and proceeded direct to the front, where an artillery engagement had been going on the whole day. It was getting dusk when the car reached its destination and a division was about to start to relieve one in the trenches.

The scene defies description. The roar of the big guns quite close was deafening; in the sky above the Imperial carriage aeroplanes were flying, scrutinising the horizon, to see whether the enemy had by chance become aware of the fact that the Tsar himself was amidst his troops.

Nicholas II., dressed in the grey overcoat usually worn by privates in the army, slowly passed along the line of the division, walking with measured steps and holding his little boy by the hand. Not an eye was dry in the ranks as all these men gathered in loyal affection around their Sovereign unheeding the thunder of the guns. It was quite dark before the monarch returned to his automobile and continued his dangerous journey.

The next day it was the turn of the armies of Generals Scherbascheff, and Levitsky to be honoured with the presence of their Sovereign. He found a part of the troops just returned from the front, where they had had a long and anxious time in the trenches, which they had defended successfully against the attack of an Austrian corps. The men, worn out as they were, in their dirty and bloody uniforms, drew themselves up proudly, and greeted the Emperor with the National Anthem, which spontaneously they began to sing when they saw him appear. The Tsar

was profoundly moved, and for a few minutes could not speak, so intensely did he feel the solemnity of the moment. At last he made a sign with his hand to enforce attention, and then addressed himself to the men who stood trembling with excitement before him.

"I am happy," he said, "to be able to see you here to-day, and together with my son to thank through you all my brave army. The whole of Russia rejoices together with me at your successes, and prays to God to give you His help in defeating our arrogant foes. I feel proud to stand at your head. Transmit to your comrades my greetings and my heartfelt thanks for their courage and their devotion to their duties, and let me thank you also for your heroic conduct of to-day and on every other occasion."

The enthusiasm of the troops surpassed anything which had been seen before. The army felt at last that its Supreme Chief shared its anxieties, labours, and fatigues. Since the days of Peter the Great no representative of the House of Romanoff had been so popular as the present Monarch of All the Russias became after his visit to the front.

The Imperial train carried the Emperor farther south to Odessa and the Rumanian frontier, where he reviewed the army corps stationed there previous to their march down towards Sevastopol and the Black Sea. Great importance was attached to this tour, not only in Russia, but also in Europe, where our Allies welcomed it with that effusion which they have never failed to show us on any important occasion, and where the German and Austrian Press attempted to represent it as the last effort of a monarch who knew that everything was lost for him as well as for his people.

After this visit of the Tsar to the front, matters there went on improving every day. We fortified ourselves

all along the line of Dwinsk, which the Germans did not dare to attack. The fact was that they had been compelled to send a large contingent of their troops to the Western front, and had not a sufficient quantity of men to risk any serious offensive against us. In the hope of hiding this fact from us, von Hindenburg, always astute, proceeded to execute a series of manœuvres intended to deceive us. He sent large detachments to a certain point during the day, and under cover of the darkness brought them back to the place whence they had started, making them repeat the performance twenty-four hours later, thus hoping that we would be induced to believe that it was always fresh regiments he was pushing forward. At first the ruse succeeded, then it was discovered, and inspired our men with renewed ardour by its proof of the weakness of their enemy.

Next the Prussians proceeded to build a formidable line of entrenchments all along the frontier, and started with a feverish activity to strengthen the fortresses which they had captured, and to bring heavy artillery to them from Eastern Prussia. The German plan at this stage of the campaign appeared to be to establish themselves firmly in the provinces which they had conquered. Public schools and the University of Warsaw were opened again, and a German civil administration was substituted for the military régime under which Poland had been living for the last fifteen months. In Lithuania, too, every effort was made to restore some kind of order, and the population was invited to co-operate in the general work of reconstruction. Judging by what was being done, it seemed to be the intentions of the German General Staff to fortify the whole line of strongholds upon which Russia had built such hopes before the war, and which circumstances had compelled her to evacuate, and then to await quietly the turn which events might take. In Russia attention seemed to be concentrated on the defence of Dwinsk and

of Riga, the fall of which would have left the road to Petrograd open to the invaders.

The second winter of the campaign found, therefore, the two enemies in close touch with each other, but neither daring apparently to open the attack against his adversary. The Russians, however, had one immense advantage over the Germans. They could afford to give their men a well-earned rest, and to await with confidence the advent of spring, when it might become possible to begin an offensive movement. This long-hoped-for movement would have one great chance of success; it would be started by fresh troops, eager to fight and to win; whilst, owing to the constant shifting from one place to another to which the Prussians were continually condemned, their soldiers must get discouraged and worn out by the terrible hardships of a service in which there was no rest except when they happened to be wounded.

The fifteen months' campaign had established the fact beyond doubt that, though the armies of the Kaiser had certainly obtained considerable successes, they had not achieved the great and decisive victories which alone could have allowed them to impose their conditions of peace upon the world. Neither Paris nor Petrograd had fallen, the British Fleet was not destroyed, India and Egypt still remained British, and in the face of such facts the Germans' task was far from complete. Frightful and bloody struggles still awaited them in the future, when it would become a critical question whether Germany could hold out, not only against the material forces of their opponents, but also against the universal detestation which they inspired. All the calculation on which the Prussian High Command had based their plans had turned out to be false, and they had been obliged to abandon their march on Paris, and had found themselves face to face with a resistance which completely upset all their splendid intentions to conquer the whole of Europe.

This fact alone constituted a moral as well as a material triumph for the Allies, which was very well understood by them, and by which they would know how to profit in the future. It had, in spite of all that they could say or affirm, considerably harmed German prestige, and shattered the reputation for being invincible which they had enjoyed ever since Sadowa and Sedan. The war had actually turned out to be a deception for them, while we, seeing our resources daily increase, and our feelings of security strengthened, were beginning to think that the wished-for end was not so far distant after all, and that we were getting nearer to the moment when the vanquished Prussian Eagle would plead for the mercy which he had refused to others.

Russia, whom her enemies represented as discouraged and helpless, was at Christmas time of the year 1915 stronger, better disciplined and organised than she had ever been at any previous stage of the campaign. Her soldiers were hardened by the twelve months' struggle they had gone through; her officers had acquired the experience which they had lacked; her commissariat department was at last working very well; her supply of ammunition promised to be inexhaustible, and was already more than plentiful; her Red Cross arrangements had been placed on a footing which left nothing to be desired. These were all conditions that allowed Russia to look with confidence toward the future, and this was precisely what the whole country did. All parties, the Radical and Socialist not excepted, shared this optimism.

The famous Bourtzeff, who had been pardoned a few months before, and who about Christmas time arrived at Petrograd to see his friends after his exile in the wilds of Siberia, when asked what he thought of the situation, said:

"I believe, believe absolutely, that we shall win. I feel convinced that Russia will emerge out of her present

trials regenerated and stronger than she has ever been, and I think also that our victory will at the same time be the victory of democracy. It seems especially to me that we cannot lose this war because we are fighting side by side with England and France, and I am full of the deepest admiration for all the heroism displayed by our Allies. Now that I have spent some time in the interior of Russia I can boldly say what I think about the spirit which prevails there. All that I have heard concerning our army proves to me that the whole country relies upon it to secure a complete triumph over our enemies.

"It would be a terrible thing if the war ended without having brought about the annihilation of Germany, and if the terrible sacrifices which we have made were to prove useless. German agents at present are trying to work in favour of a separate peace with one or other of the belligerents. I think that such a peace would be a criminal, senseless, and base treason on the part of the one who would consent to conclude it. If Russia allowed herself to entertain such an idea she would pay dearly for it later on, because all that it could bring to her would be the triumph of the reactionary ideas which have already done so much harm."

Such was the opinion—expressed in the last days of 1915—of a man whom certainly no one could accuse of being in the employ of the government, and who enjoyed an immense authority over the whole of the advanced parties in Russia. It disposes at once of the calumny set in circulation by the German Press that neither the Liberals nor the Radicals cared for the continuation of the war, and would have liked to conclude peace at any price.

Russia was united—and Russia was at bay. The divided counsels that had wrought such terrible havoc by weakening military decisions and depriving the army

of ammunition existed no longer. The people had shown the army that the soul of Russia was with them ; they had shown the enemy that, despite traitors, they were out to win ; they would show the world that though the past had been punctuated with disaster and retreat, henceforth they were fighting as one, a nation with its back to the wall, determined to avert annihilation, eager to do its part in securing peace to a blood-drenched and slaughter-weary world.

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